Work-based subjectivity and identity: assisted self-service in contemporary British retailing

Thesis

WORK-BASED SUBJECTIVITY AND IDENTITY: ASSISTED SELF-SERVICE IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH RETAILING

PAUL LAURENCE JOHN DU GAY, BA (HONS), MA (DUNELM)

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August, 1992

Sociology

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

Abstract

This thesis explores the discursive construction of work-based subjectivity and identity. It seeks to analyse both theoretically and empirically how people are 'made up' at work, first, by creating a theoretical framework for exploring the discursive production of work-based subjectivities and identities and second, by deploying this framework to examine the production of new work identities and the construction of particular work-based subjects in a specific service industry.

The organization of the thesis reflects this two-fold division. Part one (chapters two, three and four) explores certain limitations in traditional approaches to the analysis of work identity within sociology and attempts to construct a tentative alternative framework for analysing the discursive construction of work-based subjectivity and identity. The concept of 'discourse', it is argued, provides a means of overcoming the 'binary oppositions' - between 'individual' and 'productive apparatus' and 'ideology' and 'truth' - that have characterised analyses of work-identity within sociology by indicating the relational and dislocated nature of any social identity.

In the second part of the thesis (chapters five, six and seven), the theoretical framework developed in part one is deployed to examine the construction of new work identities and the production of particular work-based subjects in contemporary British retailing. Thus, in part two of the thesis, the retailing sector functions as a 'case study' for exploring how people are 'made up' at work in the present.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

In the four years since I first began this project, various debts have been accumulated. The first of these is to my supervisors, Graeme Salaman and John Allen, who have been extremely supportive, intellectually and otherwise, throughout the Ph.D. process and inspirational at all the right times.

My second debt is to my friends and family for their emotional and (let's face it) financial support over the last four years: in particular, I wish to thank my parents, Pat and Peter du Gay, for their love and various forms of assistance, Celia Lidchi, for allowing me to use her home as if it were my own, and Frances Bonner, who made sharing an office a real joy.

My third debt is to those who have discussed ideas with me, or allowed me to steal them, or generally kept me going, and among those I would like to thank: my friends in the Sociology department at the Open University, my friends among the post-graduate community at the O.U., Margeret Allott, John Clarke, James Donald and Molly Freeman.

During the last four years, HJL has, as always, been a true companion and friend. Without her constant encouragement and assistance it's doubtful whether I could have lasted the course.

Finally, I am indebted to the many women and men in the various retailing organizations I visited who gave up their time to talk to me about their work and lives. Without their participation, this project would never have been possible.

I would like to thank the following bodies for financial support: the E.S.R.C. (grant no.R00428824061) for awarding me a three year postgraduate studentship; both the Higher Degrees Committee and the Faculty of Social Sciences Research Committee

at the Open University for providing grants enabling me to continue full-time research when the financial-going got very tough.

Some of the material included in chapters three and four of the thesis has already appeared in an article I wrote for the refereed journal *New Formations*. The full title of this published article is: 'Enterprise Culture and the Ideology of 'Excellence', *New Formations*, 13, Spring, 1991 (45-61).

chapter one

an introduction

The death of God left the angels in a strange position. They were overtaken suddenly by a fundamental question...The question was, "What are angels?"

- Donald Bartheleme, 'On Angels'.

Introduction: i.d. crisis

In recent years the question of 'identity' has become a central theme in a variety of debates within the social and human sciences. Within the field of international relations, for example, the identity of the modern 'nation state' as an ostensibly 'sovereign' entity has been put into question in the light of an intensification in patterns of global interconnectedness (Held, 1991). Similarly, within certain forms of sociological analysis the dominance of 'class' as the 'master identity' of the social - that category through which all social identities are mediated - has been problematized by, for example, the growth of various 'new social movements' - 'feminisms', black struggles and the ecological movement, to name but a few. Although the term 'identity' has taken on different connotations depending upon the context within which it is deployed, one thing appears clear, 'identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty' (Mercer, 1990: 43).

The world of paid work and employment has not been exempt from this 'identity crisis'. For example, recent changes in the industrial and occupational structures of modern western societies have posed questions about the 'identity' of a modern economy conceived of both in terms of the dominance of large scale manufacturing industry and in terms of a national system of interdependent sectors, and about the identity of 'the modern industrial worker' defined as a white, male breadwinner working full time (Allen, 1992b; Pateman, 1989; Robins, 1991). In other words, such developments as the growth in services, the increasingly global organization of production and exchange, and the 'feminization' of the labour force have revealed the

'constructedness' of ostensibly stable, unified and 'natural' economic identities. In so doing they have served to indicate that rather than being some 'originary', unchanging 'base' - remaining identical with itself through out all the changes it undergoes - the 'economic' is a culturally and historically malleable category, and, thus, that any established economic identity is in essence a *contingent* identity.

Let me explain what I mean by this. At a simple level, to suggest that something is contingent amounts to saying that the conditions of existence of an entity are exterior to it and not interior to it. In other words, a contingent identity can never manage to fully constitute itself because it relies upon something 'outside' of itself for its very existence. Thus a contingent identity only constitutes itself *in relation to that which it is not.* However, because that identity would not be what it is outside of the relationship with the force antagonizing it, the latter is also part of the conditions of existence of that identity. Following some suggestive remarks by Laclau (1990), it is therefore possible to say that any social identity is basically *dislocated.* According to Laclau (1990: 39) every identity is *dislocated* insofaras it 'depends upon an outside which both denies that identity and provides its condition of possibility at one and the same time'. In this reading, 'identity' becomes an extremely ambiguous achievement, dependent upon its ability to define difference and 'vulnerable to the entities it would so define to counter, resist, overturn, or subvert definitions applied to them' (Connolly, 1991: 64).

However, as Laclau (1990: 45) goes on to suggest, if any identity is basically a contingent identity then power is always inscribed in the relation an established identity bears to the differences it constitutes. Laclau explains this affirmation in two ways. First, he suggests that if a contingent identity is a threatened identity it can only establish itself through repressing that which antagonizes it. Thus, to study the conditions of existence of any established identity is to delineate the power mechanims making it possible. Secondly, he argues that because an established identity is not a homogeneous point but an articulated set of elements there can be no identity without the exercise of power. As this articulation is not a necessary articulation, 'its characteristic structure, its "essence" depends entirely on that which it denies' (Laclau, 1990: 32).

To return briefly to the examples cited above. In her discussion of the 'patriarchal welfare state' Pateman (1989: 186-187) draws attention to the contingent character of the identity of

the 'modern industrial worker' and the power relations inscribed within that particular creation. Rather than being a universal, gender free 'individual', she argues, 'the modern worker' is a male breadwinner who has an economically dependent wife to take care of his daily needs and look after his home and children. In other words, the identity of 'the modern worker' is established in large part through the power and status afforded to men as husbands, and the constitution of women as their economic dependents or 'housewives' relegated to the private sphere of the home. The stable, public identity of the 'modern worker' is therefore established through the positioning of women as 'other' within the domestic sphere.

However, as Pateman (1989: 196) has indicated the historically contingent character of this breadwinner/dependent dichotomy has been dramatically revealed as the conditions of its existence have been quite substantially undermined in the 1980s. Changes in women's social position, technological and structural transformations within the global economy, and the persistence of high levels of unemployment have served to problematize the 'violent hierarchies' through which the fixed, stable identity of the modern worker was established. As a result what it means to be a worker is no longer as certain as once it was.

Similarly, as Allen (1992a), for example, has indicated the identity of a modern national economy conceived of both in terms of a system of internally related sectors with links out to the wider international economy, and in terms of the dominance of manufacturing industry as its 'engine of growth' and provider of 'real jobs', has been problematized by a number of developments. For example, the organization of production and exchange on an increasingly global scale has led to the 'dislocation' of national economies. Rather than systems of interconnected sectors whose boundaries correspond with those of a nation state, national economies are fast becoming 'sites' across which international forces move at varying rates.

At the same time, the predominance of service industries within contemporary western societies has problematized the identity of a modern economy structured in the image of manufacturing industry. If, for example, the identity of 'real work' is associated with employment in manufacturing and established in relation to the 'unproductive' labour of services, what is the status of that identity when the overwhelming bulk of employment in western societies is now located in so-called services ? Once again the contingency and

'constructedness' of an apparently 'given' identity is revealed as the conditions of its existence are negated.

If every identity is dislocated to the extent that it relies upon a constitutive 'outside' which simultaneously affirms and denies that identity then it follows that the effects of dislocation will never be unambiguous. If on the one hand they threaten established identities, on the other, they are the foundations upon which new identities are established (Connolly, 1991; Haraway, 1990; Laclau, 1990). As Pateman's (1989: 196) analysis, for example, suggests the displacement of the identity of 'the worker' is not the universal disaster that some have maintained. Because this identity was largely constituted in relation to the subordination of women within the domestic sphere its problematization is more disturbing for some than for others. In other words, to the extent that the 'modern worker' is basically a male character his passing may be considered more a gendered tragedy than a totally unambiguous one. If dislocation unhinges stable identities it also opens up the possibility of new articulations - the construction of new identities and the production of different social subjects.

This thesis is an attempt to explore 'the possibility of new articulations' within the world of paid work and employment. In particular, it is concerned with delineating and examining the construction of new work identities and the production of different work-based subjects.

dislocation and the subject of work

Following Laclau (1990: 39), therefore, it could be argued that the world of paid work and employment has not been immune from 'the generalization of dislocatory relations' . However, while it has been generally accepted that the ground upon which contemporary capitalism operates is increasingly dislocated, there has been vociferous disagreement as to how the effects of this dislocation should be interpreted (Sabel, 1982; Lash & Urry, 1987; Harvey, 1989; Beynon, 1992).

For some, the growth of servicing work, for example, involves a change in the relationship between different spheres of social activity, and establishes the possibility of new forms of work-based identity. According to Urry (1990), because an important feature of much servicing work is the more or less direct relationship between one or more service provider and

one or more service consumer, the traditional seperation between 'production' and 'consumption' characteristic of manufacturing employment no longer holds with services. The inherently 'social' nature of much servicing work could therefore involve a distinct change in the cultural relations of the workplace, and the production of novel, 'hybrid' work-based subjects.

On the other hand, Beynon (1992: 177) for example, acknowledges that enormous changes have taken place 'in the organization of work, in its content and distribution between people and places', yet he feels the distinction made between the nature of manufacturing work and most servicing work is highly exaggerated. For Beynon, the content and organization of most servicing jobs involves the extension rather than erosion of manual industrial labour. In other words, most contemporary servicing work entails the continuity of industrial labour 'maintained within different sets of relationships and contexts' (Beynon, 1992: 182).

Thus, whereas for Urry contemporary servicing work can be seen to involve new articulations between work and consumption and the creation of complex work identities, for Beynon contemporary servicing work involves the extension of the industrial labour into different areas of work and forms of work relationship, with a consequent diminution in the possibility of that work affording any positive meaning or identity to those performing it. According to Beynon (1992: 182), the service employee, just as much as the traditional industrial worker is subjected to 'the onward march of capital', whether the latter is conceived of as 'organized' or 'disorganized' in character.

Although both Urry and Beynon stress the dislocatory effects generated by contemporary capitalism, they operate with very different conceptions of 'dislocation'. For Beynon these dislocatory effects seem to have an objective meaning and appear to be part of a process that is predetermined. The subject of change is therefore internal to that process and is determined by it. In effect, the subject is completely absorbed by the structure. For Urry, on the other hand, the effects of dislocation are more ambiguous. Rather than maintaining some originary essence outside of its dominant articulation, the identity of 'work' is seen to be actively transformed by changes in its organization. If, for example, the worker's relationship with non-work activity is modified by the shift to service employment then there is no longer the same identity - the

worker - in a new situation, *but a new identity*. In other words, given that every social identity is a contingent construction, and given that any contingent identity is essentially relational in its conditions of existence, any changes in the latter cannot fail to affect the former.

For Urry, therefore, what it means to be a worker is not set in stone, once and for all, but is dependent upon historical and cultural conditions. Urry suggests that the idea that 'work' has some originary, 'real' meaning which precedes or evades its dominant discursive articulation in any historical or cultural context cannot be substantiated. Rather, he argues that the 'truth' about the being of any activity is only constituted within a theoretical and discursive context. In other words, what economic activity means cannot be deduced simply from the existential materiality of its constitutive elements, but only from its situation within a determinate system of social relations: within its historical, cultural and discursive context.

At the same time, Urry (1990: 271-274) also suggests that if the shift to services is in the process of dissolving certain established divisions between work and leisure and of producing more complex, 'hybrid' work-based subjects, then analysis of these developments will need to reflect this increased complexity. For example, if knowledge of the dynamics of contemporary consumer culture is essential to understanding the construction of work-identities then an examination of work organization and behaviour is no longer amenable to a purely 'productionist' analysis. As Urry (1990) argues, because an important part of the production and consumption of a service is the 'quality of the service interaction' then service work cannot be conceptualised only as an economic phenomenon but must also be understood in terms of cultural relations. Thus, if the growth of services establishes a new identity for 'work' as an object of analysis, it simultaneously requires different, possibly new approaches to understanding that object.

In keeping with the spirit of the latter argument, this thesis can be read as an attempt to examine the production of new work identities and the construction of particular work-based subjects in a specific service industry at a certain historical, cultural and discursive conjuncture. Moreover, it will attempt to deploy theoretical tools derived from a variety of sources not traditionally associated with the study of work and employment.

The thesis is divided into two parts. Part one (chapters two to five) explores certain limitations in traditional approaches to the analysis of work identity within sociology and

attempts to construct an alternative framework for analysing the *discursive* construction of work-based subjectivity and identity. The concept of 'discourse', it is argued, provides a means of overcoming the debilitating 'binary oppositions' - between 'action' and 'structure', 'individual' and 'productive apparatus' and 'ideology' and 'truth' - that have characterised analyses of work-identity within sociology. Adopting a 'discursive' approach to the study of work identity, however, will involve the deployment of theoretical and conceptual tools largely unknown within the sociology of work and employment - in particular, this approach draws upon the work of Michel Foucault and 'post-Foucauldians' such as Colin Gordon, Ian Hacking and Nikolas Rose, as well as the 'post-Marxist' analyses of Stuart Hall, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Zizek, and the cultural theory of Michel de Certeau. While there are obviously interpretative risks to be born in adopting an approach which breaks with more conventional forms of analysis, there are times, as Foucault (1987: 8) suggests 'when knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all'.

Chapter two initiates this first part of the thesis. The chapter begins by outlining and critically evaluating three prominent approaches to the study of work-based subjectivity and identity within sociology - namely, those derived from marxism, neo-weberian sociology and symbolic interactionism. After exploring certain limitations in the conceptualization of subjectivity and identity proffered by these three sociological 'schools', the chapter proceeds to indicate how the debilitating binary oppositions characterising these analyses might be overcome through the concept of 'discourse'. The chapter ends by tracing some of the insights into the construction and regulation of subjectivity and identity contained within what may be broadly termed contemporary post-structuralist and post-marxist thought, and also from within psychoanalysis.

In chapter three, insights derived from these latter theoretical formations are used to trace how 'workers' and 'managers' have been constituted - or 'made up' - at different historical periods through their positioning within a variety of discourses of work reform. A central argument of this chapter is that changes in the ways of conceptualizing, documenting and acting upon the internal world of the business organization actively transform the meaning and

reality of work. The main bulk of the chapter is concerned with delineating the ways in which people are 'made up' at work in the present through a focus upon the contemporary management discourse of 'Excellence' and its relationship to the political rationality of 'Enterprise'.

Chapter four begins by arguing that although an analysis of the construction of work-based subjectivity and identity should pay attention the ways in which the category of the 'worker' or the 'manager' is differentially constituted in the practices of governing economic life, this accounts for only one part of the story of how people are 'made up' at work. In addition to setting out the processes through which work-based identity and subjectivity are produced, 'from above', as it were, it is also important to examine what people make or do with the discourses they are subjected to and by. Thus, in chapter four, an attempt is made to construct an outline for charting the discursive construction of work-based subjectivity and identity through a focus upon what people make or do with the representations and technologies to which they are subjected.

In the second part of the thesis (chapters five, six and seven) the fledgling framework developed in Part One is used to examine the discursive construction of work-based subjectivity and identity in one particular U.K. service industry during the 1980s and early 1990s. The retailing industry is the site for this analysis and was chosen because it offers a particularly fruitful terrain of enquiry for charting the changing relationship between work and leisure identities. For example, as the quality of the service relationship is seen as an increasingly important source of value within contemporary British retailing, store managers and sales assistants within the industry have been encouraged to assemble and market aspects of their experience and identity as *consumers* in their *paid work* of providing 'excellent' customer service . Through the use of human technologies of interpersonal and emotion management, managers and workers are being trained to 'imagine' themselves in their customer's shoes, and encouraged to offer them the sort of service they themselves would ideally like to receive in a shop. Thus, in part two of the thesis, the retailing industry functions as a 'case study' for exploring the possibility of new articulations at work - the construction of new work-based identities and the production of new work-based subjects.

Chapter five initiates the second part of the thesis by providing a rationale for focusing

upon the retailing sector as a case study for 'making up people' at work. In particular, the chapter argues that the increasing importance attached by retailers to the cultural relations of consumption in the pursuit of their own profitability has had a series of repercussions for the ways in which the work-based subject of retailing is produced and regulated. The chapter begins by examining the cultural contours of retailing, and stresses, in particular, the importance of the retail sector to the mode of existence and reproduction of contemporary consumer culture. It then outlines some of the major 'logistical' developments that have allowed retailers to delineate, monitor and 'construct' the consumer more intricately, and to extend significantly the range of 'mass produced individualities' available for consumption. These developments, it is argued, which signal the move to a more 'flexible system of accumulation' within the retail sector can be seen to involve, at one and the same time, the progressive culturalisation of retailing. The chapter also considers some of the subjectivizing aspects of contemporary retail change, both for consumers, and, increasingly, for retail employees. It concludes by arguing that attempts by retailers to 'make up' the consumer involve the construction of new work identities and the production of new work-based subjects.

Chapters six and seven draw upon empirical evidence from a number of British high-street retail organizations to explore how people are 'made up' at work in contemporary retailing. Chapter six focuses upon the 'programmatic' aspirations of senior management personnel in a number of multiple retail enterprises and attempts to describe the various 'discursive practices' through which these aspirations are 'operationalised'. The chapter argues that the internal world of the retail enterprise is being re-imagined through the discourse of 'Excellence/ Enterprise' as a place where productivity is to be enhanced, customers' needs satisfied, quality service guaranteed, and creative innovation fostered through the active engagement of the 'self-actualising' and 'self-regulating' capacities of all the organizations' members. The chapter concludes by suggesting that store managers and sales assistants within contemporary British retailing are being re-imagined as 'Enterprising' subjects: self-regulating, productive individuals whose sense of self-worth is inextricably tied to the 'Excellent' performance of their work and, thus, to the success of the company employing them.

In chapter seven, the focus shifts to look at the 'actual behaviour' of those people who

occupy the position of 'manager' and 'sales assistant' in contemporary British retailing, and the effects their behaviour has had upon the programmatic aspirations of senior management personnel within the industry, and, thus, upon the process of 'making up people' from above.

The chapter begins by suggesting that while the discourse of 'Excellence/Enterprise' prefers a *tabula rasa* upon which to write its compositions it actually seeks to inscribe itself upon human material with particular biographies and to institute itself within organizations with specific histories. In other words, 'Excellence/ Enterprise' acts upon an 'always already' split and differentiated human population and upon organizations where the structuring of work relations, for example, already involves the fracturing of collections of employees around which highly-charged 'friend-enemy' groupings emerge. The chapter goes on to argue that while the establishment of 'Excellence/Enterprise' as an 'objective presence' within contemporary retailing organizations involves the privileging of this discourse, the traces of other, now 'invisible', discourses survive within these organizations. Through the presence of these 'scattered practices', the chapter continues, 'an 'uncodeable difference' insinuates itself into the internal world of the retail enterprise, denying the happy relation the organization would like to have with itself.

In the second part of the chapter the differing 'tactical trajectories' of store managers and sales assistants are traced and their effects are assessed. Finally, the chapter concludes by arguing that although the presence of popular tactics of consumption within the contemporary retailing organizations attests to the impossibility of abolishing antagonism within the workplace, and therefore of creating the 'organic' organizational identity and subjectivities promised by the discourse of 'Excellence/Enterprise', this does not indicate the 'failure' or impending collapse of the latter discourse within contemporary retailing. The chapter suggests that far from negating the normalizing power of 'Enteprise/Excellence', 'impossibility' works within that power from the beginning; that the impossibility of government reproduces and justifies the attempt to govern.

In the concluding chapter, the main arguments of the thesis are summarized and some tentative conclusions drawn concerning the contemporary construction of new work identities and new work-based subjectivities.

PART ONE

chapter two

work-based subjectivity and identity in sociology and sociological theory

Introduction

Throughout the present century the relationship between a person's sense of who and what they are - their personal identity - and the paid work they perfom for a living has been a source of regular, if almost always implicit, concern to nearly all those engaged in theorizing about modern work organization and behaviour. Indeed, such concerns can be traced in the work of authors as seemingly diverse as Elton Mayo (1933) and Harry Braverman (1974). Mayo, for example, was keen to encourage the creation of an effective, scientifically informed managerial elite who would ensure that the modern industrial worker's 'innate' need for 'belongingness' was met through the active construction of a strong sense of work-group identification. For Mayo the creation of distinctive forms of work-based identification was an essential antidote to the potential pathologies of 'modern industrial civilization'.

Whilst deploying a very different theoretical schema, Braverman was also concerned with the effects of modern economic organization upon traditional forms of work-based identity. Although he deliberately avoided any explicit discussion of the possible effects of 'deskilling' on workers' consciousness Braverman clearly believed that the process he described had profound consequences for people's experience of work. For at the same time as the logic of Capital marched inexorably onwards, destroying craft-based knowledge and organization, it also eradicated the possibility of craft-based identity.

For Braverman, this process of transformation is tinged with nostalgia. His text is permeated with a sense of mourning for 'the world we have lost' (Wood, 1982). Again, this is something the marxist also shares with the managerialist. For both writers modern work is problematic. The focus of this problem is the question of "meaning". Both Mayo and Braverman represent 'work' as the crucial source of meaning in people's lives. As a fundamental human category work is represented not only as livelihood, but also as a stable, consistent source of self-identity. However, as Berger (1964) has indicated, the process of differentiation integral to the advent of modernity involves the disarticulation of this 'essential' link between a person's sense of who and what they are and the work they perform. Thus the great divides of modern existence - between the public and the private, between work and

'leisure' etc - bring into being 'the problem of work'.

Because Mayo and Braverman define humanity through work it is unsurprising that they should represent the dynamics of modernity in pathological terms, as undermining people's essential 'real' identity. For both writers modern work is *alienating*; it is held to estrange or separate people from one another and from their own self-identity. In turn, the link they posit between work and humanity leads them to advocate a similar solution to this problem of alienation: the creation of a work-based 'dream home'.

As indicated above, Mayo's solution to the anomie of industrialism takes the form of training managers in how to create conditions at work that will satisfy workers 'innate' needs for 'belongingness'. Meanwhile, the more radically inclined Braverman indicates that 'alienation' will only be overcome through the destruction of Capitalism and its replacement by a social system where people can once again be at one with each other and themselves through their work: namely Communism/Socialism.

What unites these two writers is a belief that the dynamics of modernity make it no longer possible for people to humanly identify with the work they perform, coupled with a desire to transcend this fundamental antagonism by creating a 'dream home' that will somehow fix a person's place in the world once more and hence re-establish their essential 'real' identity and personal authenticity.

As Anthony (1977: 34-35) has suggested, through the vehicle of an essentialist representation of work as the key to human self-actualization and self-fulfilment, both managerialist discourse and radical marxist and sociological critiques of capitalist work-forms can be seen to share remarkably similar assumptions. He goes on to argue that 'the essential paradox of alienation is that it emerges with any meaning only as a result of an over-emphasis on a work ethic and work-based values'.

However, it is not simply certain managerialist and marxist accounts that are framed within the discourse of alienation. Nearly all sociological analyses of work-based subjectivity and identity have been cast within the shadow of this modern problematic. 'Alienation' has acted as a nodal point around which discussion of the proper place of paid work in people's lives has been conducted (Mills, 1951; Goldthorpe et al. 1968; Thompson & Mc Hugh, 1990).

This chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part I propose to critically examine three

major sociological approaches to the study of work-based subjectivity and identity, indicating, amongst other things, their formative relation to this modern problematic of alienation. Although these three approaches constitute the sociological sites where the 'problem' of work-based subjectivity and identity has received most explicit attention, it is still rare for subjectivity and identity to be the main foci of analysis. Rather they normally form a part of some alternative project, such as an attempt to explain changing forms of working class consciousness [1].

I begin by focusing upon marxist understandings of subjectivity at work, and the fundamental role that the concept of alienation has played, and continues to play, in such analyses. I then move on to explore neo-weberian approaches to the study of work identity, indicating how these were constructed in part in reaction to marxist notions of alienation. Lastly, I examine the tradition of symbolic interactionism concentrating, in particular, upon the relationship between 'communicative interaction', 'self', and 'work' forged by this sociological school. I show how the analysis of work identity advocated by the interactionists is formed in opposition to the 'architectonic constructions' of orthodox marxism - with its problematic of alienation - and other 'structural' sociologies (Rock, 1979).

Having outlined and critically examined these three sociological approaches to the analysis of work based subjectivity and identity I will then go on to assess their explanatory reach. In particular I will focus upon the theory of the subject residing within each of these traditions.

In the second, shorter part of the chapter I will attempt to indicate how certain fundamental weaknesses in these sociological conceptualizations of the subject might be avoided by taking the 'discursive turn', and tracing some of the insights into the construction and regulation of subjectivity and identity contained in, what may be broadly termed, post-structuralist and post marxist thought, and in psychoanalysis.

Marx, 'alienation' and the work-based subject

Marxist understandings of subjectivity at work 'begin with the concept of alienation'

(Thompson and McHugh, 1990: 308). As with many of Marx's formulations 'alienation' is imbued with different meanings in different [con]texts (Ollman, 1971). However, two main uses of the term can be distinguished in his work. First, there is 'social alienation': the power that human products and processes may come to acquire over their creators. In this sense, alienation is closely linked to the notion of 'reification' - for if social phenomena cease to be recognizable as the products of human action then it is understandable to perceive them as material things, and thus to accept them as inevitable. Secondly, there is what is sometimes referred to as 'spiritual alienation' or 'lack of self-actualisation' (Elster, 1985). In the latter usage of the term, the alienation generated by Capitalism is represented as a lack of a sense of meaning. Marx's interest in the nature of work and its role in constituting human personhood is mainly revealed in his discussions of this version of alienation. In the *Economic and Political Manuscripts*, for example, he asks

> In what does this alienation of labour consist ? First that the work is *external* to the worker, that it is not part of his nature, that consequently he does not fulfil himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery, not of well being, does not develop freely a physical and mental energy, but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker therefore only feels at home in his leisure, whereas at work he feels homeless. His work is not voluntary but imposed, *forced labour.* It is not the satisfaction of a need, but only a means for satisying other needs. Its alien character is clearly shown by the fact that as soon as there is no physical or other compulsion it is avoided like the plague. Finally, the alienated character of work for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his work but work for someone else, that in work he does not belong to himself but to another person (1963: 177-178).

As this passage suggests, under the capitalist regime of production workers are alienated from the product of their labour since what they produce is appropriated by others and consequently they have no control over its fate. At the same time, they are also alienated from the very *act of production.* Working becomes an alien activity because it offers no intrinsic

satisfaction. However, these two facets of alienation really only serve to highlight the ultimate crime: that under the capitalist mode of production workers are alienated from their human nature or 'species being'. According to Marx, if workers are alienated both from the act of production and from the products of their labour then their productive activity is systematically deprived of those specifically human qualities which distinguish it from the activity of animals and thus define what it means to be a person.

While Marx frequently suggested that human nature and needs were a product of history and culture, thus appearing to endorse an anti-essentialist position, it is also apparent throughout his work that one capacity in particular is deemed to define humanity; namely the capacity for creative labour[2]. As Gaukroger (1986: 306-307) has indicated, Marx claimed that the alienation of labour formed the basis of all other forms of alienation, and that with the overcoming of alienated labour all other forms of alienation would be eradicated. While 'conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from animal activity', for Marx the conditions of emergence, or 'origins', of human consciousness are linked inextricably to production. 'Man' (*sic*) becomes aware of himself, he argues, 'in a world that he has created'.

> It is just in his work upon the objective world, therefore, that man really proves himself to be a species being. This production is his active species life. Through this production, nature appears as *his* work and his reality. The object of labour is therefore the *objectification of man's species life*: for he duplicates himself not only, as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively in reality, and therefore he sees himself in a world that he has created. In tearing away from man the object of his production, therefore, estranged labour tears him from his species life, his real objectivity as a member of the species, and transforms his advantage over animals into the disadvantage that his inorganic body, nature, is taken away from him (quoted in Kraugroger, 1986: 303-304).

Simply stated Marx sees it as 'Man's nature' to be his (*sic*) own creator. Humans are

deemed to form and develop themselves and their capacities by working on and transforming the natural world outside of themselves in association with their fellow human beings. In this progressive relation between humans and the world, it is in humankind's nature to be in control of this process, to be the initiator, the subject in which the process originates.

Thus the conception of human nature articulated by Marx is one in which it is assumed that people realise their identity as human persons, as a 'species', only through creative labour that is carried out for their own purposes and not under the control and exploitation of others. This implies that alienation is essentially an *objective* condition; it is not necessarily reflected in felt job-dissatisfaction or frustration. Indeed it is quite possible for alienation to grow increasingly more widespread throughout the social body without any growing feeling of discontent amongst those subjected to it. To put it bluntly, the analysis of alienation appears to require no consideration of the subjective experience of its effects.

Rather than being concerned with whether people's conscious desires are satisfied or how those people think about themselves and their lives, alienation refers to the question of whether these people's lives in fact actualize the potentialities which are objectively present in their human essence (Elster, 1985). In this reading, people are alienated when they are not being what they could possibly be in the best of all possible worlds. In order for them to become what they could be - to fulfil their human potential, or achieve 'self-actualization' - a different type of social formation is required. For Marx the victory of communism/socialism over capitalism was to provide the central generating mechanism through which people would become human once more; that is fully realise their potential as all-round creators. In other words, because complete human persons could never exist under conditions of alienation, subjectivity could have no force or effect. It could only await its activation/fulfilment in the destruction of capitalism and the building of socialism/communism.

Until that transformation was achieved individual human agents living under the 'real conditions' of capitalism were to be represented simply as bearers of economic categories such as labour and capital. The 'later' Marx insisted that 'only the people is a concrete fact', and allowed himself to consider people only 'in so far as they are the personifications of economic categories, embodiments of particular class relations and class interests' (quoted in Smith, 1988:4). Thus when Marx claimed that 'men make their own history' it was only the plural

(and, needless to say the masculine) form of the noun which was of importance.

Clearly what is missing from Marx's account is any discussion of how individual human agents as bearers of class traits come to reconcile their existence as individual subjects with their existence as a 'collective subject', or to convert from one to another. In other words, the dynamics of alienation rely upon a certain neglect of 'what goes on in people's heads' (Smith, 1988: 4-5). Rather than attempting to explain the processes through which the social gets folded into the psychical, Marx instead suggests that the objective condition of alienation by its very nature prevents workers from being able to perceive their own situation (Elster, 1985: 107).

At this point it becomes apparent how closely related the concept of 'spiritual alienation' is to the notions of 'ideology' and 'false consciousness' in marxist theory (Eagleton, 1991: 70). As Bottomore and Rubel (1963: 21) have indicated 'false consciousness of individuals is a condition of alienation, and ideology is the system of beliefs produced by such a false consciousness'. For Marx, becoming a complete human being implies a release for the 'subject' from its alienation in the social, *and*, more generally, from the obfuscations and distortions of ideology. 'Man' (*sic*) is only able to emerge from 'the people' and become a 'concrete individual' in the realm of 'real freedom' where ideology no longer exists to alienate 'him' (*sic*). As Gaukroger (1986: 311-312) suggests, some kind of imaginary wholeness of the human being can thus be seen to reside at the end of Marx's theoretical trajectory. Similarly, Smith (1988: 7) argues that

> If the goal of a socialist revolution is to be the development of "complete individuals" this surely marks an appeal to either a pre- or post-ideological condition where the subject/individual is again a plenitude.

The passage from 'really existing' conditions to those that would allow the 'complete individual' to flourish clearly involves the eradication of mystification, and it is around the notion of the 'real' that Marx attempts to conduct his argument for that dissolution.

In his work there appear to be two levels of reality at work. First, there are the 'real

conditions' under which human agents live their lives in the here and now: the everyday realm of lived experience . This is the 'real' that Marx posits in opposition to the Hegelian idealist dialectic (Bottomore and Rubel, 1963: 22). At one and the same time, however, Marx also proposes a second and more truthful level of reality - a 'real' that is hidden within and by the representations that constitute ideological appearances. In other words, the second 'real' is contained within the first 'real', waiting to be activated. As Smith (1988: 11) suggests, although the language Marx deploys tends to obfuscate the differences between these two levels of reality

> it seems that the one (the one shot through with "illusions" and the "appearance of simplicity") is merely the false representation of the other (the one which will become "simple and transparent" and in which the fully developed "individual" will live).

As Hall (1984: 66; 1988) amongst others has argued, this proposition that 'real men' somehow live on the cusp of another reality that is only susceptible through the gaze of scientific marxism is proposterous; merely an objectivist fantasy which presumes that real life conditions can be known independently of language, culture and history, by a few (marxist) individuals 'armed with properly formed concepts' and lucky enough to enjoy a 'God's eye view' (Rorty, 1991). The notion of false consciousness that this idea of a double reality inaugurs, implies that a strict separation can somehow be maintained between material social life and consciousness and its products. However, as Raymond Williams (1977: 60) has indicated, 'consciousness and its products are always, through variable forms, parts of the material social process itself'.

This double decker notion of the real has led to a view of ideology - that which distorts a more truthful reality - as always a negative force; as one which is never enabling for those human subjects inhabiting ideologically constituted social space (Eagleton, 1991; Hall, 1988).

If ideology is viewed in this way, and if the subject of history is always represented as sub-jected to social formations, then this appears to significantly diminish any impulse towards social change on the part of the individual human agent. As Laclau (1990), for example, has

suggested the only transformatory force available to such a view would appear to be a subject-less automatic history.

Such a 'take' on the historical process inevitably foresees the eradication of ideology, and issues a demand for the unveiling of history's real truth. The desire to establish a transparent relationship between the socially active signifier and the real relations to which it might refer is thus expressed in a vocabulary of truth and falsity, clarity and misrecognition. This negative conception of ideology is most clearly articulated in *The German Ideology* where Marx refers to the the realm of consciousness in which 'men *(sic)* and their relations appear upside down as in a *camera obscura*'. Thus ideology entails misperception and an incomplete knowledge of reality. It constitutes the dark realm of falsity in relation to which the light of objective marxist 'science' will prevail.

What is important here is the idea that a fundamental 'real' object takes precedence over the sense of ideology as reality. The simple and transparent social organization that Marx envisages communism/socialism as constituting will involve the righting of the lines of light in the camera obscura so as to produce an undistorted image. It is in the perception of this undistorted image that the complete labouring individual, that Marx talks of, will participate (Smith, 1988: 12-13).

However, if the site of the subject continues to be seen as a matter of false consciousness, some argument must be put forward to indicate the conditions of possibility for the passage into the realm of light, and the 'raising of the subjective blinds' (Smith, 1988: 13). Traditionally within marxism this argument has been advanced around the duality of theory and practice, and around the question of a possible distinction between ideology and science. However, these debates have tended to gravitate towards the same truth/falsity distinction which had authorized the contention that ideology can be represented as a distortion mechanism, preventing the establishment of true knowledge (Beechey & Donald, 1986). To this extent traditional marxism has had no real choice but to predicate the possibility of new social relations upon the disappearance of ideology.

Braverman and beyond: alienation, subjectivity and the labour process

In the previous section I indicated the centrality of the notion of alienation to Marx's understanding of subjectivity, and the close relation between this master 'signifier' and the concepts of ideology and false consciousness. I suggested that Marx viewed 'creative labour' as a foundational category: labour is represented as the fundamental constitutive activity of 'Man'. Thus the alienation of labour is at the basis of all other forms of alienation. Only with the overcoming of alienated labour will all other forms of alienation be overcome. Alienation is Marx's nodal point, possessing an ontological priority to mediate all other antagonisms, determining their place and their specific weight. Only if 'Man' is once more able to express 'himself' (*sic*) through 'his' productive activity will 'he' (*sic*) be able to obtain true self-knowledge, knowledge of other human beings, knowledge of the world etc.

However, because alienation is basically conceived of as an objective condition its analysis appears to require no consideration of the subjective experience of its effects. If the subjects of alienation are always and only sub-jected, then this appears to substantially diminish the possibility of their engendering any impulse towards social change. The only motor of transformation available to such a view would appear to be an 'automatic subject-less history'.

Nonetheless, while Marx's conception of alienation has been shown to be a dubious explanatory device, it has also proven to be an extremely enduring one. Virtually all industrial sociology of a marxist variant has some, if often unacknowledged, recourse to the problematic of alienation as an explanatory mechanism. As I indicated earlier, one of the most influential post-war marxist texts in the sociology of work and employment, Braverman's (1974) *Labour and Monopoly Capital* is centred around the objectivist concept of alienation.

Braverman (1974:27) defended an exclusive focus upon the objective construct of class, and a deliberate avoidance of the subjective aspects of deskilling, on the grounds that it provided a radical riposte to 'bourgeois' accounts of changes in the labour process,in which, he argued, 'alienation' only existed in the consciousness of workers. In other words, Braverman objected to influential accounts such as those of Blauner (1964) because he felt that they assumed and implied that workers could be liberated from alienation through specific

mechanisms such as job enrichment programmes and technologies, while, to his mind, the exploitative and oppressive structure of capitalist relations of production remain unaltered.

While Braverman's thesis came in for wide-ranging criticism from within the marxist tradition (Edwards, 1979; Storey, 1985), as well as from outside, most significant attempts to extend Braverman's analysis from within the field of marxism have continued to deploy, if only implicitly, the concept of alienation.

One overwhelming theoretical weakness in Braverman's text has been identified by a number of critics within the marxist tradition (Burawoy, 1979; 1985; Thompson, 1990; Thompson and McHugh, 1990) : namely that the 'objective' and 'subjective' aspects of the labour process can somehow be separated out and examined independently of one another. Reacting to Braverman objectivist stance, Burawoy (1985: 24) argues that an understanding of the capitalist labour process cannot proceed without due attention being paid to the 'subjective' experience of work. Just as Marx's original conceptualisation of 'alienation' eradicated the subject from history, so, following in his footsteps, does Braverman.

As Thompson (1990: 114) has argued 'the construction of a full theory of the missing subject is probably the greatest task facing labour process theory'. However, attempts to provide just such a theory from within the marxist tradition have remained problematic. This has been due, in large part, to the continued presence of unacknowledged traces of the 'alienation' hypothesis within these projects.

One of the earliest, and still possibly the most significant, of post-Braverman attempts to insert the subject into marxist analyses of the labour process is Burawoy's (1979) *Manufacturing Consent.* Shaped in large part as a reaction to Braverman's thesis (1979: xiii-xiv), Burawoy sets out to examine how 'capitalism' has managed continuously to secure increasing volumes of surplus value at one and the same time as it obscures the seemingly exploitative nature of its control of the labour process. His arguments revolve around an account that deploys ethnographic evidence to counter Braverman's thesis of labour intensification resulting from an increase in management control and the seperation of conception and execution. For Burawoy (1979: 72) the major generating mechanism in the simultaneous obscuring and securing of surplus value is an 'expansion of the "self-

organisation" of workers as they pursue their daily activities'. In other words, it was the relaxation of management control within the context of the development of an elaborate shop-floor induced 'game' of 'working out' that ensured the simultaneous generation and obscuring of surplus value. As a result of 'playing the game' Burawoy noted a sharp fall in management-worker conflict as antagonisms were deflected horizontally across the organization and away from the (for him) essential arena of class struggle. For Burawoy (1979: 89) the active involvement of the workforce in 'making-out' generated a particular sense of work-based identity which compensated for the negative features of wage-labour. In his eyes, what guaranteed the securing of surplus value, whilst obscuring the consciousness of its extraction amongst workers, was absorption in the 'game' and the subjective sense of autonomy and freedom it generated in workers involved in playing it. As Burawoy suggests, the pressures of 'making out' came more from fellow workers than from management, because 'playing the game' brought psychological and social rewards to those involved in it.

> when one is trying to make out, time passes more quickly - in fact, too quickly - and one is less aware of being tired. The difference between making out and not making out was thus not measured in the few pennies of bonus we earned but in our prestige, sense of accomplishment, and pride. Playing the game eliminated much of the drudgery and boredom associated with industrial work (1979:89).

While Burawoy's discussion of the 'production of consent' at work does indicate how a sense of identity was created by workers in the practice of 'making out', his analysis has proved somewhat controversial (Knights & Willmott, 1989; Davies, 1990). For one thing, Burawoy's theory of consent is predicated on a fundamental division between work and non-work consciousness. He argues that shop-floor culture tends to be produced independently of any 'external' influences (1979:156). In other words, for Burawoy, consent is 'manufactured' relatively independently of a particular individual's biography or social attributes: gender, 'race', age etc. According to him, while particular social attributes may determine the placement of particular people into particular labour processes, it is their positions within production that determine their workplace 'consciousness' and behaviour. Accordingly, it is 'internal factors'

which are most likely to account for the production of consent.

Thus Burawoy's account suggests that shop-floor behaviours and satisfactions can be understood in terms of gender, age or 'race' free motivations and are shaped entirely in relation to positions within production. This suggests that once people arrive at the workplace they are no longer recognizable as black, old, female, or whatever, but simply assume a gender-free, age-free, 'race'-free identity as 'workers'.

This weakness in Burawoy's study is clearly related to the ontological priority he affords to the category of labour. Following Marx, Burawoy represents labour as humankind's fundamental constitutive activity. Consequently, the place and weight accorded to ethnicity, gender and the rest is determined by labour, because labour is *the* category through which all other aspects of existence are mediated. As Knights (1990: 311), for example, has indicated Burawoy shares with Marx 'a tendency to fall back upon an essentialist theory of human nature...he assumes that the absence of conditions through which to express "the potentiality of the human species" is experienced as a deprivation for which compensation must be sought by constituting "work as a game"'. In other words, by defining what it means to be a person, first and foremost through the activity of 'creative labour'.

It transpires that the 'turn of the subject' in Burawoy's analysis is predicated upon Marx's objectivist fantasy of alienation. That workers 'play the game' is deemed to have little to do with anything else - such as the maintenance of their identity as particular sorts of male persons (Knights & Willmott, 1989; Davies, 1990) - than their desire to compensate for a thwarted human essence. By elevating labour to the status of 'essence' Burawoy effectively negates any further analysis of subjectivity at work.

Although Burawoy's attempt to insert the subject into the labour process is formed in reaction to Braverman's objectivist project, in the end it simply reiterates many of the problems inherent in Braverman's account. In particular, a common dependence upon the problematic of alienation in both projects ensures that the multiplicity of discourses positioning the subject - whether of gender, of ethnicity and so forth - disappear into the amorphous category of 'labour'/'worker'.

Neo-weberian approaches to the study of work-based identity

In their different ways both Braverman and Burawoy conceive of their respective projects as attempting to remedy a major deficiency in post-war sociological approaches to the study of work and employment. Braverman (1974: 27) described *Labour and Monopoly Capital* as a corrective to a focus amongst post-war industrial sociologists upon action and consciousness at the expense of the structures which condition their expression. While criticising Braverman for his strong objectivism, Burawoy (1979: 136-140) also makes it clear that he has no truck with the middle range actionalist approaches of 'bourgeois' sociologists. In particular he singles out for criticism the neo-weberian studies of Goldthorpe and Lockwood (1968; 1969) for what he considers to be their exclusive focus upon external 'orientations' to work and their consequent neglect of the fundamental role of the relations in production in constituting worker's consciousness. As I indicated earlier, for Burawoy (1979:135) 'whatever consent is necessary for the obscuring and securing of surplus value is generated at the point of production rather than imported into the workplace from outside'.

In other words for both Braverman and Burawoy the 'action frame of reference'[3] articulated most keenly by *The Affluent Worker* project (1968; 1969) represents a a major blot on the sociological landscape because it attempts to deny the validity of alienation. It does so, they argue, by focusing upon subjective consciousness to the detriment of structural context, and by highlighting external 'orientations to work' at the expense of analysing the relations of production, and the dynamics of the capitalist labour process.

However, for the authors of *The Affluent Worker* the neo-weberian 'action frame of reference' provided a refreshing antidote to extreme objectivist accounts - such as those of orthodox marxism - of changes in working class consciousness (Lockwood, 1988) [3]. In many respects, as Goldthorpe et al. (1969: 183-185) suggest, their approach was shaped in reaction to contemporary marxist analyses, and, in particular, to the problematic of 'alienation'.

For Goldthorpe, Lockwood et al. the analysis of work identity contained within *The Affluent Worker*, and especially the explanatory device of 'orientations to work', was basically an unanticipated 'by-product' of a much grander project (1969: vii). It is to the wider context of this project that I now turn.

The Affluent Worker and the 'embourgeoisiement' hypothesis

The main aim of *The Affluent Worker* project was to empirically examine the claim that the British working classes of the late 1950s and early 1960s were becoming increasingly middle class. In other words, the study sought to explore the issue of *embourgeoisiement.* During the late fifties many commentators were concluding that growing affluence in many western economies was leading to the incorporation of prosperous manual workers into the middle classes. In Britain a third consecutive Conservative victory at the polls in 1959 seemed to confirm the validity of the embourgeoisiement hypothesis, by indicating that the traditional class basis of party politics was being eroded.

Goldthorpe, Lockwood and their fellow researchers identified three main developments which were alleged to be of crucial significance to the progressive embourgeoisiement of the British working class. There were changes in economic circumstances (increased incomes and access to mass produced consumer goods, with consequent changes in lifestyles); changes in the technology and organization of work (the decline of manual labour; developments in technology 'beyond conventional mass production methods' making work both more intrinsically satisfying, and thus creating a greater identification between workers and the companies employing them); and changes in the urban landscape (increased owner-occupation; suburbanization; and the re-development of the inner city). However, it was not the authors objective to critically assess the evidence of these changes but rather to discover whether, in those contexts where most of these factors were to be located, they exhibited the effects attributed to them.

Having identified the main elements of the embourgeoisiement thesis the empirical approach taken by the researchers proved quite straightforward: to find a prototypically affluent working-class population and discover how middle class it had become. In the event three groups of car workers in Luton became the subjects/objects of the research programme.

Six years after initiating the project, and literally hundreds of interviews later, the authors were in a position to formulate their conclusions. They uncovered a portrait of the affluent

worker which was unlike either of their posited ideal typical models: the 'traditional' or 'solidaristic' model, or the 'bureaucratic' model inferred from the embourgeiosiement theorists[5]. Instead they 'discovered' that the Luton workers did not adopt a 'them' and 'us' attitude to work; nor did they see their union as part of a wider Labour movement. However, this co-existed with a lack of identification between worker and firm: the workers didn't see themselves as part of a team with the same objectives. These workers experienced little intrinsic satisfaction in their jobs. The lifestyle of the affluent worker was also most evidently not of a 'traditional' kind, involving neither networks of kinship nor those of neighbourhood. Moreover, the affluent worker didn't participate in the mutual entertaining or club membership which might be expected of those aspiring to middle-class status. Finally, in their 'images of society' the affluent workers adhered neither to the dichotomies of class power essential to 'solidaristic' working class consciousness, nor to the hierarchies of status and prestige perceived by those with a 'bureaucratic' middle class image set.

In each case, then, the affluent worker assumed a set of attitudes related to but qualitatively different from those associated with the ideal-typical complexes of work and social relations contained in the 'traditional/solidaristic' and 'bureaucratic' models of consciousness. In their attitude to employment the affluent workers appeared to believe a contract existed between themselves and their employer: they agreed to undertake arduous and boring work in return for which they expected an exceptionally high wage. The contract was subject to continuous negotiation and here, though they rarely attended a branch meeting, the affluent workers expected their union to represent them. In their leisure time, they had withdrawn from group activity, preferring instead to spend all their time, money and energy within the confines of the nuclear family, to an extent which justified the use of the term 'privatized' to describe their outlook. As Lockwood (1975:202-203) suggested

> The social environment of the privatized worker is conducive to the development of what may be called a 'pecuniary' model of society. The essential feature of this ideology is that class divisions are seen mainly in terms of differences in income and material possessions. Basically, the pecuniary model of society is an ideological reflection of work attachments that are instrumental and of community

relationships that are privatized. It is a model which is only possible when social relationships that might provide protoypical experiences for the construction of ideas of conflicting power classes, or of hierarchically independent status groups, are either absent or devoid of their significance.

The affluent workers' 'image of society' depended mainly on an assessment of income, so that, while they knew they were better off than some, they were equally conscious of being worse off than others. On the basis of these findings the embourgeoisiement thesis was rejected.

The 'Affluent Worker' and work identity

As I indicated above, the analysis of work behaviour and attitudes developed by Goldthorpe and his fellow researchers was largely an unanticipated 'by-product' of the wider aims and objectives of the embourgeoisiement project. In particular, their major explanatory device of 'orientations to work' - the meaning attached by workers to their work which predisposes them to think and act in particular ways towards that work - arose from the adoption of an action frame of reference during the course of the Luton research, when the initial approach guiding the project - the 'technological effects' approach - proved inadequate. Having failed to find, as expected, marked dissimilarities between those in different occupational groupings - such as semi-skilled assemblers, process workers and machine operators - in their relationships with work-mates, supervisors, employers and unions, the research team began to look for other explanatory principles. In so doing they arrived

at the idea of the explanatory importance of the nature of workers' orientations to employment, this being considered as a factor influencing job choice, mediating the individual's experience of work tasks and roles, and thus necessarily influencing his definition of the work situation and his conduct within it (Goldthorpe, quoted in Bulmer, 1975: 14).

The authors associated ideal-typical orientations to work with specific complexes of work and community social relations. Thus the action frame of reference was not treated as something outside of, or separate from, an analysis of social structure but conceived of as a necessary part of such an analysis. In other words, the orientations which workers were deemed to bring into the workplace were not randomly distributed in the population, but were themselves systematic products of extra-industrial structures (Bulmer, 1975: 14).

> We believe that in industrial sociology what may be termed an action frame of reference within which actors' own definitions of the situations in which they are engaged are taken as an initial basis for the explanation of their social and behaviour and relationships...An action frame of reference would direct attention systematically to the variety of meanings which work may come to have for industrial employees. And this in turn would then compel recognition of the fact that in modern society the members of the industrial labour force form a highly differentiated collectivity - in terms, for example, of the positions and roles they occupy in their non-working lives, in their sub-cultural characteristics, and in the pattern of their life histories and objectives for the future (Goldthorpe et al., 1968a: 184).

According to the authors the privatized affluent worker exhibited an 'instrumental' orientation to work. As I indicated above, privatised instrumentalists were the very embodiment of 'economic man' (*sic*). They saw work as merely as a means to a financial end and did not invest it with a group or communal meaning: they shared no sense of occupational identity or community. Their 'social imagery' exhibited a 'money-model' of society which viewed differences in income as the basis of stratification and was unconcerned with 'class relations' as marxists would understand them. In large part, Goldthorpe et. al (1969: 182) argued, this propensity amongst affluent workers to accept work as essentially a means to extrinsic ends was best understood as something that 'to an important degree existed independently of, and prior to, their involvement in their present work situations'. In other

words, the typically privatized, family-centred, and consumption-based lifestyle of the affluent worker was the main determinant of their attitude to and (lack of) identity with the work they performed for a living.

While this 'instrumental orientation to work' of the affluent worker flew in the face of the expectations of the embougeoisiement thesis, it also tended to negate the interpretations of work identity based upon the idea of latent alienation.

Although Goldthorpe et al. acknowledged that the embourgeoisiement thesis had come in for severe criticism from marxist sociologists, they argued that the alternative explanations for 'working class passivity' developed by the latter relied on an unverifiable claim concerning the 'objective' intensification of 'alienation'.

> That the increasing impoverishment of the working class has not occurred and that living standards have, in fact, substantially improved has to be recognised. But, it is claimed, although the immediate 'survival' needs of the worker may thus have been largely provided for, his fundamental needs as a human being - those essential to his human potentialities - remain unfulfilled and indeed deliberately frustrated, and at the same time the workers awareness of this fact is systematically inhibited. For example, while affluence gives the worker increased possibilities as a consumer, his greater income is taken up merely in the satisfaction of the 'false' needs that are imposed upon him by prevailing institutions and interests - the need to live in the manner prescribed by advertisements and the mass media, the need to 'have fun', to 'relax', to 'escape', and so on. No matter how strongly these needs are actually felt, they are false in that they do not derive from real freedom in self-expression but are rather the result of indoctrination and manipulation...Furthermore, it is also stresses that, in the last analysis, the alienated consumer has to be understood in terms of the continuing alienation of labour in the organisation of production (1969:15-16).

According to the authors (1969: 179) alienation 'is not a specifically sociological concept: it

is rather a notion expressive of a certain human and social philosophy which often figures crucially in a rhetoric of revolution. It is not intended to be tested against fact'. However, they go on to acknowledge that the idea of 'latent alienation' does have some resonance with many of the findings they reported on the attitudes and behaviours of the workers they studied. For example, the overriding concern exhibited by affluent workers with increasing their standards of domestic consumption, the extent to which their future objectives were defined in terms of those standards, their home-centred and typically privatized style of life - all those features were features which could be regarded as aptly exemplifying what marxist critics pejoratively called 'the civilisation of individual consumers' where modern workers, or 'happy robots' (Mills, 1963) sought 'cheap fun' to make up for the lack in their human essence caused by the objective presence of 'alienation' at work.

Most crucially, however, Goldthorpe et al. (1969) suggested that the idea of alienation appeared closely applicable to the affluent workers' experience of their work, and to the meaning and place that work typically held in their social lives. Indeed, Marx's comment that alienated labour was not the satisfaction of a need, but only 'a means for satisfying other needs' seemed to sum up the spirit of the authors' main conclusions.

For Goldthorpe et al.(1969:180) the figure of the alienated worker was 'far more readily recognisable in our research data than the worker "on the move towards new middle-class values and middle-class existence"'. Nonetheless, while suggesting that the descriptive picture of the objectively alienated worker painted by many marxists offered a persuasive means of summing up many of their own findings, the *interpetation* of this picture proffered by marxist sociologists was completely rejected by the *Affluent Worker* researchers. In other words, while the description of the alienated worker appeared salient the underlying assumptions of the latent alienation thesis were considered to be erroneous.

One such assumption was that alienation, as exhibited in a preoccupation with 'false' consumer needs, derived fundamentally from the work situation. In this reading, it was precisely because the worker was not 'at home' in 'his' (*sic*) work - because work deprived 'him' (*sic*) of 'his' (*sic*) necessary creative activity - that 'he' (*sic*) could only find power in 'his' non-work existence; specifically in the passive dream state of consumption.

Such a position was considered fundamentally at odds with the research findings in the

Affluent Worker project. For Goldthorpe et al (1969: 181) there was no direct and uniform association between immediate, shop-floor work experience and employee attitudes and behaviour that were of wider reference. This was the case, they argued,

> because the effects of technologically determined conditions of work are always *mediated* through the meanings that men give to their work and through their own definitions of their work situation, and because these meanings and definitions in turn vary with the particular sets of wants and expectations that men bring to their employment. Thus, among the workers we studied, no systematic relationship was to be found between the degree to which their work might be considered as objectively 'alienating' and, say, the strength of their attachment to their jobs, the nature of their relationships with workmates, or their stance in regard to their employing organization (1969: 181).

According to the authors, rather than being a simple effect of their - often significantly differing - tasks and roles within the organization of production, the instrumental attitudes of their subject population appeared to originate outside of the workplace, prior to their involvement in the jobs they were doing when interviewed. This interpretation was confirmed, the authors argued, by the fact that many of their respondents had previously performed jobs of an intrinsically more rewarding, and objectively less 'alienating' nature, but had given these up to perform work of a more alienating character for a significantly increased wage.

Rather than an overriding concern with consumption standards reflecting alienation in work, it could be claimed that precisely such a concern constituted the motivation for these men to take, and to retain, work of a particularly unrewarding and stressful kind which offered high pay in compensation for its inherent deprivations. It might indeed still be held that to devalue work rewards in this way for the sake of increasing consumer power is itself symptomatic of alienation - perhaps even of alienation in an extreme form. But in this case, of course, the idea of work as being

> invariably the prime source of alienation has to be abandoned and its origins must be sought elsewhere; specifically in whatever social-structural or cultural conditions generate 'consumption-mindedness' of the degree in question (1969: 182-183).

The authors suggested that, as consumption has assumed an increasingly important place in marxist analyses of working class passivity, the explanatory reach of alienation has also been expanded. For example, in the so-called 'mass culture critique' of Frankfurt School sociologists (Marcuse, Adorno et al.) the influence of advertising and the mass media is cited as a major factor in the constitution of individuals as 'happy robots', and, thus, as a key component in the maintainence of working-class inertia. However, Goldthorpe et al. (1969; 183) suggested that the 'mass culture critique' offered no guidance as to how, for example, 'individuals and groups are *differentially* exposed to and responsive to the models of consumption that the media present'. Instead they indicated the importance of factors such as life-cycle phase and geographical and social mobility in determining the extent to which media influences will be countered, unopposed or re-inforced by '*interpersonal influences*'. For the authors, 'if giving priority to "the passive needs of personal and domestic life" is to be taken as constitutive of alienation, then, one would suggest, serious analysis calls for the development of a new empirical sociology of consumption rather than for the refurbishing of an old philosophical anthropology of production' [6].

According to Goldthorpe et al. (1969: 183-184) the objectivist fantasy of alienation could offer no assistance to sociological analysis. To analyse work identity and the meaning of consumption solely in terms of alienation was, in their view, to engage in a form of social diagnosis 'which in the end cannot be rejected by force of logic or evidence and which, by the same token, others are in no way constrained to accept'. It was not self-evident to the authors that the affluent worker's concern for comfortable housing and leisure goods such as televisions was a visible manifestation of 'false needs'. Rather they considered the material possessions and amenities their respondents strove for as representing 'something like the minimum material base' on which the affluent worker and 'his' family 'might be able to develop a more individuated style of life, with a wider range of choices, than has hitherto been possible for the mass of the manual labour force'. In particular they indicated that given the

quite painful dilemma that their respondents faced between less intrinsically satisfying work and greater economic rewards with which to carry out their lifestyle projects (a dilemma they suggest, often not faced by those in a superior class position) they 'would not be inclined to talk *de haut en bas* of "stunted mass-produced humanity", "made-to-measure consumers" or "sublimated slaves"'(1969:184). Rather than ascribing an ontological priority to the category of 'labour', Goldthorpe et al (1969:187) insist that the relative importance of production and consumption in the construction of subjectivity and identity is an issue for sociological enquiry.

some problems with the neo-weberian approach

As one of the most substantial contributions to post-war British sociology, it is unsurprising that the claims contained within *The Affluent Worker* project have been the subject of considerable critical attention. Within the sociology of work and employment, attention has focussed, in particular, upon the notion of 'orientations to work' (Beynon and Blackburn, 1972; Daniel, 1973; Westergaard, 1970; Critcher, 1975; Marshall, 1988).

While the notion of 'orientations to work' deployed by the authors was designed to put an active subject at the heart of their project, much of the criticism aimed at *The Affluent Worker* has revolved around the place of the individual actor in their analysis. Although Goldthorpe et al. rightly criticise orthodox marxism for treating people as 'cultural dopes', the status of the subject in their own study is far from clear (Critcher, 1975:32-33).

According to Marshall (1988: 111), for example, there is just as much of an essentialist subject at the heart of *The Affluent Worker*, as there is in the worst excesses of the alienation hypothesis. For Marshall, the neo-weberian authors of *The Affluent Worker* are guilty of decontextualising subjective experiences and meanings, with the result that their attempt to impute a particular type of identity to their subjects remains unsubstantiated. The instrumental worker, he argues, appears to be nothing more than 'the result of a shallow arraying of data for each *individual* along a *single* dimension'.

Echoing the marxist critique of Westergaard (1970), Marshall suggests that Goldthorpe et al.'s thesis concerning 'instrumental orientations' may be true but it is trivially so. In effect it does little more than re-invent the wheel: if the structural dictates of a modern market economy

ensure that workers are interested in their wage packets then in these circumstances it should come as no surprise that ambitions and desires are often articulated in pecuniary terms; money, after all, is the generalized medium of exchange in western market economies.

The main issue is not so much that people have 'instrumental orientations' but what these orientations might mean to the individuals concerned. However, this question is one the authors of *The Affluent Worker* have no answer to. In part, as Critcher (1975: 31-33) argues, this is actually a problem of methodology. Their interview schedule asked a lot of questions about workers' perceptions - of their jobs, of the role of their unions etc - but very few were designed to elicit the workers' feelings about these topics.

While Goldthorpe et al. talked about the importance of actor's own definitions of their situation the attitude survey they deployed had the effect of separating 'orientations' from social action, thereby leading to a static model of an unchanging instrumentally oriented worker whose ability to pursue his or her 'essential' interest in pecuniary gain is governed entirely by changes in the social structure that are unrelated to workers' actions (Marshall, 1988: 11-114).

Rather than overcoming the structural determinism they deplored in orthodox marxism (Lockwood, 1988), and hence avoiding the strictures of essentialism, Goldthorpe et al. ended up repeating many of the same mistakes. Despite their eloquent testimony to the action frame of reference the authors of *The Affluent Worker* adopted, in practice, the extreme weberian position of distinguishing sociology from history and defining the purpose of sociological enquiry as the construction of ahistorical 'ideal types' (Marshall, 1988). The underlying premise of their approach is that there exist identifiable value-complexes, images of society, and 'orientations to work' that can be directly related to highly visible factors in an actor's immediate social milieu. Thus types of 'identity', for example, can largely be read off from various structural factors. So the strong sense of occupational identity attributed to the 'traditional proletarian' worker is conceived of as a product of 'his' (*sic*) objective work and community situation. Similarly, the lack of work-based identification associated with the affluent worker can be explained by 'his' instrumental orientation to work.

In this way, identity becomes detached from social action. 'Identity' appears to be something static - 'unchangingly determined by the objective characteristics of which it is a

reflection' (Marshall, 1988: 114). Such an outcome is obviously at odds with the professed aims of neo-weberian sociology - to provide explanations which go beyond an emphasis on the structural constraints which condition action to include an attempt to understand the meaning of that action for those involved in it - and more in line with the sort of marxist orthodoxy Goldthorpe et al. set out to counter.

As Marshall (1988: 119) suggests the subjects of *The Affluent Worker* study appear to be completely devoid of biography. The limits imposed by conventional attitude surveys and structural interview schedules ensure that the affluent worker appears as a subject 'possessing constant wants and interests (originating in an unspecified source or sources)'. Apparant changes in workers' demands and behaviour 'can therefore only be explained by reference to changes in the present sytem of constraints holding them in check' (Marshall, 1988: 121). This form of historicism leaves 'orientations to work' devoid of historical context, detached from particular practices or action and, therefore, apparently unaffected by changes in these.

In other words, unless 'instrumentalism' is located firmly within its contexts, and unless some attempt is made to go beyond the one dimensional and predictable pecuniary responses generated by attitude surveys about 'orientations to work', the hypothesis imputing an economistic, privatized identity to affluent workers remains unsubstantiated (Critcher, 1975; Marshall, 1988).

At the heart of the neo-weberian approach to work identity lies a tautological argument:

> identity is referred to as part of the explanation of why an individual or group should pursue a particular course of action but that very choice of action is seen as evidence for the identity attributed to the individual or group (Brown, 1986:1).

For Marshall (1988: 120) the first step towards a more constructive approach to the study of work identity - one that avoids the pitfalls of both orthodox marxism and neo-weberianism - must involve the re-introduction of social action into the framework of sociological analysis. Attitude surveys and other large-scale quantitative methodologies simply cannot deal with action, he argues. They lead researchers to divorce identity from action thereby effectively eradicating meaning from the research agenda through a process of decontextualisation.

Rather than attempting to explore identity using highly structured attitude surveys and isolated interviews, it should be investigated as a component of everyday practices. According to Marshall (1988: 120) 'since there is no necessary correlation between speech and action, satisfactory explanations of either require independent evidence as to both the action and the subject's perception of it'. In other words, because language is not self-evidently meaningful - because its meaning is is always a function of its use: its intended audience, the conditions of its deployment and so on - the analysis of action, 'identity' or consciousness can only be conducted in the context of lived practices.

For Brown (1986:1) one possible way out of the impasse into which neo-weberian approaches to work identity have fallen is provided by symbolic interactionism. Within this sociological tradition identity has been conceptualised as created in and transformed by symbolic social action. Echoing Marshall's (1988: 121-122) call for deployment of the ethnographic imagination in the study of the lived practices within which identities are embedded, Brown points to the interactionist's utilisation of participant observation in the analysis of identity construction and transformation over time.

symbolic interactionism, self and identity

Born in Chicago of a fusion between American pragmatist philosophy (C.H. Cooley, J. Dewey, G.H. Mead, C. Peirce, W.I. Thomas et al) and German formalist sociology (in particular, the work of G. Simmel), symbolic interactionism [7] has from its inception denied the utility of macrosociological reasoning. In portraying the social as a fluid and changeable series of transformations, interactionists have effectively negated the language of structure and statics, transforming sociology into 'a limited abstracting discipline which was incapable of substantial generalisation, propositional thinking or metaphysical thinking. It must dwell on the world of the self and the grammar that sustained that world' (Rock, 1979: 236). Essentially, the notion of 'symbolic interactionism' derives from the work of G.H.Mead, and the distinction he developed between symbolic and non-symbolic interaction.

In non-symbolic interaction human beings respond directly to one anothers' gestures or actions; in symbolic interaction they interpret each others gestures and act on the basis of the meaning yielded by the interpretation...Mead's concern was predominantly with symbolic interaction. Symbolic interaction involves *interpretation*, or ascertaining the meaning of the actions or remarks of the other person, and *definition*, or conveying indications to another person as to how he is to act. Human association consists of a process of such interpretations and definitions. Through this process the participants fit their own acts to the ongoing acts of one another and guide others in doing so (Blumer, 1966: 537-538).

As Stryker (1980: 33-34), for example, has suggested, 'of all the precursors of symbolic interactionism, none is more important or influential than George Herbert Mead. Indeed, to a considerable degree, Mead's conceptualisation remains central to all contemporary versions of the framework'.

Of crucial significance to Mead's thought, and hence to interactionism generally, are the notions of self and identity. Mead's 'social psychology' was aimed at breaking down the established cartesian dualisms of mind and body, individual and society (Henriques et al., 1984: 13-25). The basic thesis that Mead propounded was that the 'mind' and the 'self' were formed within the social, communicative activity of the group. Thus, Mead was one of the first modern social theorists to explore the notion that identity develops within discourse. For him, discourse and language are social activities, and in no sense the personal property of individual human beings.

Like the later Wittgenstein, or de Saussure, Mead views language as a system of signification independent of the intentions of individual's considered as singular entities. For Mead, language is always connected to the field of social interaction so that a word or gesture largely derives its meaning from its connection to social meanings. In turn, social meaning refers to the meaning that an act takes on from the place it occupies in the totality of interaction in the group. However, as Burkitt (1991: 37) has argued, for Mead, 'the original and primary function of language remains as a medium for the more successful mutual adjustment of individuals within their social activity'. In other words, language plays a key role in

regulating social behaviour, which is seen as necessary for both social order and a harmonious existence.

According to Mead the role of language is crucial to the process of social communication, and to the emergence of the self and the subjective attitude.

> The individual experiences himself, not directly, but only indirectly, from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the same social group, or from the general standpoint of the social group as a whole to which he belongs. For he enters his own experience as a self or individual, not directly or immediately, not by becoming a subject to himself, but only in so far as he becomes an object to himself just as other individuals are objects to him or in his experience; and he becomes an object to himself only by taking the attitudes of other individuals towards himself within a social environment or context of experience and behaviour in which both he and they are involved (Mead, 1934, quoted in Burkitt, 1991: 36).

Language is the most significant element in this process because it is through language that people internalize the attitudes of the social group and, on the basis of this, form themselves as subjects. It is only through language that such a general, impersonal standpoint can be communicated against which individuals can react to their own selves and organize their responses accordingly. This is due to the status of language as an impersonal system of signification. Language provides individuals with a thoroughly objective standpoint through which they become objects to themselves.

Against the tenets of methodological individualism Mead is claiming that identities do not emerge through individuals own private experiences but only in social life, where 'other selves in a social environment logically antedate the consciousness of self which introspection analyses' (Mead, 1910, quoted in Burkitt, 1991: 37). In other words, that seemingly most private of domains, the self, is not private after all: the self only emerges in social processes of interaction, communication and the utilisation of language.

The 'social self' articulated by Mead has two constitutive elements, both involved in a

constant dialogue: these are the 'me' and the 'I'. The former is defined as the individual as an object of consciousness, and the latter as the individual as having consciousness (Joas, 1987). As Rock (1979: 236) suggests the social self of symbolic interactionism is 'grounded in an internal dialogue between consciousness as subject and consciousness as object. That dialogue is ordered by conversation, and discourse has become a model for all analysis of interaction'.

Thus both 'faces' of the self are social and only emerge together in discourse. Because the 'I' is the self as having consciousness, it is associated with the fundamental sense of who and what we are. However, the 'I' cannot function as such without the simultaneous presence of a 'me'. The subjective sense of identity could not develop without the simultaneous constitution of the self as a social object. According to Burkitt(1991: 40) Mead's 'I' is '"contemplated action-in-progress" while the "me" stands beside objectified past actions and is identified with them'.

> The 'me' on its own would be totally without unity as it breaks down into many different selves, each one associated with past social acts in different local circumstances. The objective self will have many aspects to it, and possesses many capacities stored from past experiences which can be used in the future. And it is the active 'I' which draws on these resources as it moves into the future, its reflective function planning activity in accordance with the 'me' - or parts of the 'me' - of past acts, while its active function executes these plans in activity...The self, then, is only created and sustained as a mobile region of self-producing social activity (Burkitt, 1991: 40).

For Mead, the fact that the self is constituted in discourse means that certain aspects of a person's sense of who and what they are are bound to mirror and incorporate the general morals or values of the wider group contained within discourse (Henriques et al, 1984: 16-22). The self takes on 'the values of the group' through the mechanism of the 'generalized other'. The latter is 'an abstract summation and embodiment of all the varied replies that have been elicited by different 'me's'. It represents a kind of condensed general will which responds to the self's performances' (Rock, 1979:143). As it is language that makes possible broad

opportunities to participate in communication, then the use of language suggests the creation of 'the most diffuse of all generalized others - the community of speakers of which one is a member: the most inclusive social class of humans is the one defined by the logical universe of discourse (or system of universally significant symbols) determined by the participative communicative interaction of individuals' (Rock, 1979:145).

According to Mead, therefore, the development of identity only takes place under social conditions. The construction of identity occurs in the social organization that arises from the mutual adaptation of conduct, or adaptation that is situated in ongoing activity and which takes place through the medium of communication. It is in this communication, particularly through language, that individuals become self-reflexive and gain control over their own responses during social activity. The values and morals of the generalized group also enter consciousness through language and play a significant role in the control of behaviour, taken as necessary for both social order and a harmonious existence (Henriques et al, 1984: 209; Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

symbolic interactionism and work identity

In direct opposition to the aspirations of objectivist sociological projects, interactionism treats the self as the moving centre of social formations [8]. It alone is deemed to synthesize whatever order exists. Thus 'society' is represented as ceaselessly produced in myriad exchanges which can have little fixity of structure or definition. For interactionism the 'God's eye view' inherent within marxism and similarly disposed macro-sociological apparatuses, appears to maintain that the world can be made to yield an unconditional and absolute logic and that those who do not grasp this logic are blinded by mystification, by a disadvantaged structural position, by an unfortunate location in the flow of historical process, or by a lack of proper intellectual weaponry (Rock, 1979: 28-29). This position, interactionists argue, is untenable. There can be no Olympian plane from which to look down in judgement upon the social, because the social is only constructed in an on-going process of interaction. The social is animated by the everyday practices of people in interaction and not by an immanent and *sui*

generis logic of its own.

This processual view of the self as the moving centre of 'society' has considerable consequences for the study of work identity. As Moorhouse (1989:22) has indicated, interactionist studies such as those of Roy (1955;1973), Gold (1964), Hughes (1971) and Becker (1963;1971), for example, provide very powerful criticisms of 'any kind of alienation notions' by indicating how paid time in even the most routinised of environments can be given purpose and how meaning is generated in the interactions of shop-floor life.

The interactionists argued that no work situation - no matter how apparently autonomous, or restrictive - could be understood without reference to the action and beliefs of those involved in it (Joas, 1987), and that even the most 'dirty' and 'lowly' of ocupations could become a source of identity for those performing them (Hughes, 1971; Becker, 1963). Everett Hughes (1971), for example, argued that sociologists of work and employment needed to ignore the 'normal' categorization of occupations (skilled, unskilled, professional etc) and instead concentrate upon the processual 'career' of persons through their work lives; in other words upon 'the moving perspective in which the person can see his life...and interprets the meaning of his various attributes, actions and the things that happen to him' (Hughes, 1971: 137). In this way the commonalities of modern work-life would be revealed.

The Interactionists argued that as a subjectively meaningful account, or narrative, of one's biography, the notion of 'career' could be as usefully applied to a shop-assistant as it could be to a solicitor. In effect it suggested that a much greater range of work experience was deemed capable of providing meaning than the notion of 'alienation' seemed to allow for. However, while the concept of 'career' was not used to measure the degree to which a person's paid work was their 'central life interest', it was deployed to indicate that even the most restrictive of work situations could and did involve the symbolic construction, in interaction, of identity and community (Hughes, 1971; Becker, 1963; Roy, 1973).

For interactionists the effective levelling function performed by a concept such as 'career' gave the lie to the structural determinism of orthodox marxism and other objectivist sociologies. Rather than assuming that 'alienated labour' could not derive any 'real' sense of identity from routinised capitalist work, interactionists attempted to indicate that all 'careers' were progressions through 'identity bestowing situations' (Salaman, 1974; Goffman,

1961;Gold, 1964).

In his classic participant observation study of informal interaction at the workplace, Roy (1973) reports on his experiences of working a six-day week on unskilled, highly repetitive factory work, and how he and his fellow 'operatives' faced and dealt with 'a formidable "beast of monotony"'.

At first the work in question was 'a grim process of fighting the clock...I had struggled with the minutes and hours during the various phases of my industrial experience, but never had I been confronted with such a dismal combination of working conditions on the extra long work-day, the infinitesimal cerebral excitation, and the extreme limitation of physical movement' (Roy, 1973: 208). Gradually, however, Roy became aware of the social interaction going on around him. What at first appeared to be 'just a stream of disconnected bits of communication which did not make much sense', and 'occasional flurries of horseplay so simple and so unvarying in pattern and so childish in quality they made no strong bid for attention' (1973:209) soon took on a different complexion as Roy became more involved in shop-floor life. The more he familiarised himself with the communicative interaction about him the more ' the disconnected became connected, the nonsense made sense, the obscure became clear, and the silly actually funny. And as the content of the interaction took on more and more meaning, the interaction began to reveal structure. There were "times" and "themes", and roles to serve their enaction. The interaction had subtleties, and I began to savour and appreciate them' (1973:210).

These inititially meaningless events were 'revealed' to Roy as rituals, games with known and accepted rules, expectations, roles and routines - patterns of horseplay, joking and seriousness which succeeded in 'marking off the time', giving it content and hurrying it along. Once involved in these activities Roy (1973: 214-215) allotted them an important function: 'they captured and held to make the long day pass. The twelve hours of repetitive work per day became "easy to endure" as the "beast of boredom" was gentled to the harmlessness of a kitten'. Through the medium of these patterns of informal interaction, Roy argued, a work-based culture and identity was forged amongst the operatives that proved a key source of 'job satisfaction', which he deemed to have a 'negative effect' on labour turnover (1973: 217-

218).

In keeping with the interactionists concern with a 'sociology of regulation' (Burrell and Morgan, 1979: 17) - in other words with providing an explanation of the *status quo*; of how the social is formed and maintained in interaction - Roy indicated that from the informal interactions he observed/participated in 'may also be abstracted a social structure of status and roles. This structure may be discerned in the carrying out of the various informal activities which provide the content of the subculture of the group. The times and themes were performed with a system of roles which formed a sort of pecking hierarchy...The fun went on with the participation of all, but within the controlling frame of status, a matter of who can say or do what to whom' (1973:218).

At the same time, 'in both the cultural content and social structure of ...group interaction could be seen the permeation of influences which flowed from the various multiple group memberships of the participants. Past and present "other group" experiences and or anticipated "outside" social connections provided significant materials for the building of themes and for the establishment and maintenace of status and role relationships' (1973:219). Here Roy indicates that the 'symbolic work' of social interaction permeates the paid employment/'leisure' divide. The struggle to make meaning at work involved the deployment and utilisation of many of the forms, interests and communications of 'leisure' and 'free-time'. Without eliding the differences between work and 'leisure' Roy indicates that similar processes of 'meaning making' go on in both spheres, that they permeate one another, and that individual identities are produced as a result of all forms of symbolic work.

the 'unexplicated context': criticisms of symbolic interactionism

For the interactionists, identity is both produced and transformed in an on-going process of symbolic social interaction: 'the student of identity must necessarily be deeply interested in interaction for it is in and because of...interaction that so much appraisal of self and others occurs' (Strauss, 1969:44). This conceptualisation of identity as an on-going socially accomplished process has a number of consequences for the practice of sociological analysis. For example, the embeddedness of identity in communicative social action means that its

articulation by sociologists must of necessity involve them in attempting to understand the meaning of social action for those involved in it. Interactionists attempt to do this through the use of 'sensitizing concepts' and participant observation techniques. At the same time, because interactionists stress that all forms of symbolic social interaction involve identity construction, they have argued that no work situation, for example, can be assumed to be incapable of providing a sense of identity to those involved in it.

However, the theoretical and methodological trajectory of interactionism is not without its costs. Everett Hughes' (1971) levelling concept (or 'form') of the 'career', for example, can be seen to be a somewhat ambiguous achievement. On the one hand, as I indicated above, the concept reiterates the interactionist claim that many different types of paid work involve similar symbolic processes of identity and community construction. However, at the same time, this 'levelling' also has the effect of eradicating *difference*.

> we need to rid ourselves of any concepts which keep us from seeing that the essential problems of men at work are the same whether they do their work in the laboratories of some famous institution or in the messiest vat room of a pickle factory (Hughes, 1971: 300).

By focusing exclusively upon the similarities between occupations and work experience in terms of 'forms' of symbolic interaction, important differences, particularly those relating to the question of power relations and 'structural' inequality, are consequently lost from view.

Burawoy (1979: 34), for example, blames Roy's reliance upon an exclusively interactionist methodology for his failure to delineate the broader environment within which his studies of workplace interaction were conducted: 'What he could not gather from participant observation is not to be found in his work'. As a consequence the wider social relations within which the interaction he describes is inscribed are ignored. Burawoy (1979: 34) notes that Roy tells his reader nothing about the company, 'the union, other departments, the state of various markets and so on'. The interactionists 'insistence on being a closed (secret) participant observer imposed serious limitations on the material that could be legitimately be deployed in analysis'.

Because of a pragmatist attachment to the exigencies of everyday interaction, the interactionists have not developed any consistent theory of the wider social formation. Even though interactionists identify language as an impersonal sytem, and therefore as a form of 'macro' structure, they do not develop adequate explanations of the formation of processes at a macro level. As Burkitt (1991: 51), for example, has argued, while Mead hinted that the division of labour was an important feature of modern social formations - because it was the objective basis for the differentiation of roles and therefore individual identities - he offered no explanation of the social processes that led to the greater complexity of this division. Instead a unitary social domain is posited - the 'generalized other' - within which the individual subject is unproblematically located. In other words, a conformity is assumed between the individual and the values and social regulatory systems of the broader social formation (Henriques et al., 1984: 209).

In the division of labour Mead argued, the individual

> always and necessarily assumes a definite relation to, and reflects in the structure of his self or personality, the general organized pattern of experience and activity exhibited in or characterizing the social life-process in which he is involved, and of which his self or personality is essentially a creative expression or embodiment (Mead, quoted in Burkitt, 1991: 51).

As Giddens(1979: 254) has suggested Mead's philosophy, and hence symbolic interactionism more generally, 'lacks an understanding of the broader society as a differentiated and historically located formation'. Interactionism is therefore unable to offer an adequate appreciation of the problems of institutional analysis and transformation.

According to Robertson (1980: 260) the failure of interactionist conceptions of identity to deal with the issues of power relations, ideology, and 'institutional transformation' is largely a product of its development within 'the American context'.

> In *the American context* the notion of identity has often been used...to suggest that it is out of what we might call 'identity work' that 'society' (as a processual notion)

> is constructed (that is out of encounters with others, and *via* others with self)...In general, it could be said that symbolic interactionists have conceived of identity formation as an ongoing activity relative to a posited but unexplicated context.

For Robertson, underpinning both traditional and modern variants of American pragmatist philosophy (Rorty, 1991), for example, as well as symbolic interactionism, is a 'cultural commitment to *equality*' which militates against consideration of the sorts of problematics - of 'ideology', social stratification, power inequality etc - that have preoccupied many European sociological discussions of 'identity' [9].

Discussion: the subject of work in sociology

Having outlined and critically examined the three most prominent sociological approaches to the study of work-based subjectivity and identity I now want to examine their explanatory reach.

It is apparent that no unequivocal picture of the work-based subject emerges from an analysis of these approaches. As Knights and Willmott (1989: 537) have indicated sociological studies of work identity have tended to gravitate, often despite their best intentions, to one or other pole of the dualism between action and structure, individual and society.

Dominating debates in this field has been the Marxist problematic of alienation, where the oppressive structure of capitalist relations of production is deemed to have alienated 'Man' from his 'species-being' as a creative labourer. Because complete, unambiguous, human persons are recognised as coming into being only with the destruction of capitalism/ideology and the building of communism/socialism, subjectivity is represented as having no force or weight under present conditions of alienation. As a consequence of this form of overdetermined analysis and explanation, no room is left for, and no weight assigned to, individual and/or group experience, meaning and action: structure virtually eradicates agency. As Barrett (1991: 110) has recently suggested, the question of subjectivity 'is a massive lacuna in Marxism' one which has 'stood in the way of a broader consideration of experience,

identity, sexuality, affect and so on', not only in paid work but in all other spheres of social existence.

In opposition to the objectivist stance of the marxist problematic the neo-weberians deployed an 'action frame of reference' to the study of work identity. By focusing upon 'actors own definitions of the situations in which they are engaged' the neo-weberians argued that no systematic relationship could be found between the degree to which a worker's occupation could be described as 'objectively alienating', and the degree to which worker's identified with the jobs they performed.

However, while the neo-weberians argued that they had installed an active subject at the heart of their analysis, thus overcoming the structural determinism they deplored in orthodox marxism, the subject they delineated also appeared to be almost exclusively sub-jected to social formations. Despite their eloquent testimonies to the action frame of reference the neo-weberians adopted the extreme weberian position of distinguishing sociology from history and defining the purpose of sociological enquiry as the construction of a-historical 'ideal-types'. Thus their 'subject' - whether the 'instrumental' worker, 'traditional proletarian' or whatever - was largely a product of the objective work and community situation which he/she inhabited. Different forms of identity were largely 'read off' from structural factors.

The underlying premise of this approach was that objectively identifiable value-complexes, images of society, and 'orientations to work' - ideologies, if you like - could be revealed that were directly related to an actor's immediate social milieu, and which were unproblematically translated into the minds and behaviours of these actors. In this way, the subject was once again divorced from social action: a static creation, 'unchangingly determined by the objective characteristics of which it is a reflection'.

In direct contrast to marxist and neo-weberian analyses, the symbolic interactionists placed the 'self' in social action at the centre of their sociological project. In portraying the 'social' as a fluid and changeable achievement of human communicative interaction the interactionists effectively negated the language of structure and statics. According to interactionism the 'self' is the moving centre of social formations; an ongoing socially-accomplished process. It alone is deemed to synthesize whatever order exists.

The self comes into being through taking on the attitudes of others towards it within

communicative social interaction. Language is the most significant element in this process because it is only through language that people 'internalize' the attitudes of the social group and thus constitute themselves as subjects. However, as I indicated earlier, this formulation, on the one hand, assumes both a local and unitary social domain, and, on the other hand, leaves unproblematized the content and take-up of those attitudes. A conformity is assumed between the individual subject and the values and morals of the 'generalized other'.

While interactionism has placed a great deal of emphasis upon regarding 'social life' as the active accomplishment of purposive, knowledgeable actors, and upon the 'social origins' of reflexive consciousness, the status of the 'social' itself in interactionist thought is extremely limited. Because the 'social' tends to be equated with small interactional groupings and the 'generalized other', interactionism offers no explanation of the broader society as a differentiated and historically located formation.

Similarly, although interactionists identified language as an impersonal system, and therefore, in some senses as a 'macro' structure, they were unable to provide an adequate account of the formation of processes at a macro level, or of the relation between such macro structurings and the micro processes of everyday interaction. The 'macro' is a posited but unexplicated context in interactionist thought. Therefore, while interactionism sets out to overcome traditional dualisms it ends up replicating them.

Because interactionism fails to engage with the language of structure and is unable consequently to explore the workings of structural power inequalities, of ideology and so on, it cannot begin to consider how social divisions and conflicts are inscribed in the self through social organization and how these limit the scope for consciously chosen actions by individuals in the social group. For interactionism the unproblematic take up of social values by the self in a unitary social domain leaves, for example, no place for a theory of the repressed unconscious and the truly 'split' subject of psychoanalysis, and flies in the face of anthropological and historical research which has indicated how varied and diverse are the ways in which 'the person' and 'selfhood' can be and have been categorized in different social formations and epochs (Beechey & Donald, 1986: ix-x).

As Giddens (1979: 255) has argued the notion of human agency cannot be understood

without the notion of structure, and vice versa, nor can this 'duality of structure' be conceptualised outside of history. In consequence 'the social totality cannot be best understood as in functionalist conceptions of the whole, as a given "presence", but as relations of presence and absence recursively ordered'. According to Laclau (1990: 44) this paradox of social action indicates the centrality of the category of 'dislocation'. For Laclau, dislocation is the 'primary ontological level of constitution of the social' because to understand social reality 'is not to understand what 'society *is*, but what *prevents it from being*'. Thus any *identity* is dislocated insofaras it 'depends on an outside which both denies that identity and provides the conditions of its possibility at the same time' (Laclau, 1990: 39).

If subjects are simply the product of structures, for example, as in the marxist and neo-weberian conceptions of work identity considered above, then a total determinism would govern social action, and history would be reduced to the status of automaton; change, chance, contingency would be inconceivable. However, if the structure that 'makes up' the subject does not manage to fully constitute itself, if it can only constitute itself in relation to an 'outside', as Laclau suggests, then the structure will not be able to fully determine the subject.

> The structure will obviously not be able to determine me, not because I have an *essence* independent from the structure but because the structure has failed to constitute me as a subject as well. There is nothing in me which was oppressed by the structure or is freed by its dislocation; I am simply *thrown up* in my condition as a subject because I have not achieved constitution as an object...I am *condemned* to be free, not because I have no structural identity as the existentialists assert, but because I have a *failed* structural identity. This means that the subject is partially self-determined. However, as this self-determination is not the expression of what the subject already is but the result of its lack of being instead, self-determination can only proceed through processes of *identification* (Laclau, 1990: 44).

Unsurprisingly, the emphasis on social action and processes of identification in symbolic interactionism provides a antidote to the structural determinism of both marxist and neo-

weberian analyses of the subject. However, interactionism problematically asserts that the 'self' has *no* structural identity, and consequently that agency can be theorized without the notion of structure. Nonetheless, despite this excessive reliance upon agency to the detriment of social structure, there is one common thread uniting interactionist analyses of the subject with those advocated by Laclau: that is that discourse is an organizing principle of social life and subjectivity. However, for Laclau, as for other post-structuralists and post-marxists, discourse is not equated with a 'local moral order', as in interactionism, but rather is understood as constitutive of the social domain as a whole.

In the final section of the chapter I want to explore the notion of discourse and examine the ways in which subjectivity can be said to be constituted 'discursively'.

'the discursive turn': making up people

In recent years it has fallen to the concept of 'discourse' to provide a means of escape from some of the great binary oppositions defining the project of the social sciences: mind/body, nature/culture, individual/society, ideology/truth [10]. According to Hall (1992: 291-295) at its most basic level a discourse 'is a group of statements which provide a language for talking about - i.e. a way of representing - a particular kind of knowledge about a topic. When statements about a topic are made within a particular discourse, the discourse makes it possible to construct the topic in a certain way. It also limits the other ways in which the topic can be constructed'. However, a discourse does not consist of one statement alone, but of several statements linked together to form a 'discursive formation' (Foucault, 1972). These statements are linked because any one statement implies a relation to all of the others; 'whenever between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity, (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say, for the sake of convenience, that we are dealing with a *discursive formation*' (Foucault, 1972: 37-38).

A central feature of this concept of 'discourse' is that it effectively negates traditional oppositions between language and social practice, meaning and human action. Discourse

concerns the production of knowledge through language but discourse is itself produced through practice: '*discursive practice* - the practice of producing meaning (Hall, 1992; Laclau & Mouffe, 1987). Because all social practices involve the production of meaning, all such practices are discursive. As Laclau & Mouffe (1987: 82-83) indicate 'a stone exists independently of any system of social relations, but it is, for instance, either a projectile or an object of aesthetic contemplation only within a specific discursive configuration. A diamond in the market or at the bottom of a mine is the same physical object; but again, it is only a commodity within a determinate system of social relations. For that same reason it is the discourse which constitutes the subject position of the social agent, and not therefore, the social agent which is the origin of discourse'.

Thus 'discourse' cannot be seen simply as a combination of 'speech and writing' but always as a dimension of material practices (Hall, 1988). At the same time, however, the knowledge that a discourse produces constitutes certain sorts of power over those who are 'known' by and through it. As Foucault (1977: 27) argues, 'there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge'. When that knowledge is deployed in practice, those who are known in a particular way will be subject to it. Thus forms of power 'work' by constructing and maintaining the forms of 'subjectivity' most appropriate to a given type of social practice. Subjectivities are constituted by and rendered instrumental to a particular form of power through 'the medium of knowledges or technical "savoir faire" immanent to that form of power' (Minson, 1985: 44-45). In this way an intimate relationship is established between discourse, knowledge, power and subjectivity.

According to Foucault (1980:131; 1982: 212) when power operates so as to enforce the 'truth' of any set of statements, and consequently to make up particular sorts of subject, then such a discursive formation produces a 'regime of truth'

> Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth; that is the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as 'true' and 'false' statements; the means by which each is sanctioned; and the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth...(Foucault, 1980:131).

For Foucault (1980; 1982) 'personality' and 'individuality' are to be treated as historical categories rather than as empirical referents that exist prior to and independently of their constitution in discourse, and the powers exercised over them. In *Discipline and Punish* and the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, for example, Foucault conducts an analysis of 'the technologies of persons' without presuming a given human subject. That analysis is concerned with the problem of 'subjectification'; in other words, with delineating the processes by which individuals are brought under each others control and made mutually dependent - that is 'subjected' - and with outlining the procedures through which identities are allocated to individuals - identities by which they identify themselves ('self knowledge' or 'consciousness') and others identify them ('mutual recognition').

However, while Foucault manages to delineate the discursive practices through which humans are made subjects he does not specify what it is that these technologies and practices of subjectification work on. While insisting that resistances and failures are an essential element in the further diffusion of technologies of normalization he does not ascribe to them some originary 'essence' of rebelliousness (Foucault, 1977: 272; 1982 95-96). According to Cousins & Hussain (1984:255) by bracketing off the question of the nature of the material upon which these techniques and practices operate Foucault's analysis risks ending up as a form of behaviourism - 'where human capacities would be the effect of particular practices and in which resistances to them and their failures would be accounted for by their own incoherence and inconsistencies'.

> the problem with behaviourism is that it does presuppose a subject: it assumes that human beings are a *tabula rasa* ready to receive any impression and that they are homogeneous. As it were, behaviourism only expels the subject through the front door only to let it slip back in through the back door. The alternative would be to specify the nature of human material and face up to the problem of the subject at some stage' (Cousins & Hussain, 1984: 256).

Cousins & Hussain (1984:256) go on to suggest that the human material on which techniques of subjectification work 'is always already differentiated and hence resistances and failures may be related to the human material on which the techniques operate as well as other factors', and that 'what we may call psychical relations is a legitimate object of enquiry into such differentiation'. However, since they offer no indication as to why this might be the case, it has fallen to others to attempt to specify the nature of the material upon which discursive practices operate.

'lack in the structure': the 'split' subject of psychoanalysis

One way in which the behaviourist and 'panoptic' overtones of Foucault's analysis of subjectification has been modified by some of his followers (de Lauretis, 1987; Miller & Rose, 1990; Rose, 1990) is through a stress on the multiplicity of different discourses positioning the subject. In other words, subjects are constituted discursively but not by one monolithic discourse. Rather they are positioned by a multitude of different discourses. As a result of these multifarious positionings the subject of a religious discourse may find itself in conflict with the subject of a national discourse. The negotiation of this conflict may produce a result unanticipated by either of the contributing discourses.

While this position appears to introduce a measure of indetermination into the Foucauldian trajectory, it does not lead to any significant undermining of 'power/knowledge'. As Copjec (1989: 55) has argued 'not only is it the case that at each stage what is produced is conceived in Foucauldian theory to be a determinate thing or position, but, in addition, knowledge and power are conceived of as the over-all effect of the relations among the various conflicting postions and discourses. Differences do not threaten panoptic power; they feed it'.

According to Copjec (1989) Foucault and his followers seem to infer that subjectivity and desire are *nothing but* the product of discourses of the social. For them there is nothing to be explained about how the social is worked into the psychic , because the latter is merely the product of the former. In *Governing the Soul*, for example, Rose argues that

> the 'self' does not pre-exist the forms of its social recognition; it is a heterogeneous

and shifting resultant of the social expectations targeted upon it, the social duties accorded it, the norms according to which it is judged, the pleasures and pains that entice and coerce it, the forms of self-inspection inculcated into it, the languages according to which it is spoken about and which it learns to account for itself in thought and speech (Rose, 1990:218)

In the work of Foucault (1980: 186) and his followers, technologies and practices of subjectification are deemed to 'materially penetrate the body without depending even on the mediation of the subject's own representations. If power takes hold of the body, this isn't through its first having to be interiorized in people's consciousness'. However, in this case, the 'very condition and substance of the subject's subjectivity is his or her subjectivization by the law of the society which produces that subject' (Copjec, 1989: 55). In other words, the panoptic gaze sees all; subjectivity and desire are not only an effect, but also a realization of the discourses of the social. However, if this is the case then the subject should prove no problem.

> The image of self-surveillance, self-correction, is both required to construct the subject and made redundant by the fact that the subject thus constructed is, by definition, absolutely upright, completely correct. The inevitability and completeness of its success renders the orthopedic gesture of surveillance unnecessary. The subject is and can only be inculpable (Copjec, 1989: 62).

And yet as Cousins and Hussain (1984: 255-56) indicate the subject is always the problem. If the panoptic gaze sees all there should be no need for the language of 'failure' and 'resistance' articulated by Foucault (1982) and his followers (Rose, 1990; Miller & Rose, 1990). However, if a resort to behaviourism is to be avoided an explanation must be offered connecting the 'congenital' failure of technologies of individuation (Miller & Rose, 1990: 10) with the human material upon which they operate.

This is where a more psychoanalytic approach to the constitution of subjectivity differs

from that proffered by Foucault and his followers. For psychoanalysis, the human material upon which technologies and practices of subjectification work can be delineated. The subject of psychoanalysis is ineradicably 'split'; it is not a stable, determinate, homogeneous entity. The subject's shape and effectivity are never fully guaranteed because the subject is in an ambivalent relation to itself as it takes on the self-monitoring capacities prescribed by technologies of individuation.

This is not to say that the subject is the cause rather than the effect of the social order. For example, to say that the scientific subject is constituted through the discourse of science is to suggest that it is always thereby obliged to survey itself, its own thinking, not *subjectively*, not through a process of introspection to which the subject has 'transparent' access, but *objectively*, from the position of the scientific discourse. At this stage the 'orthopsychic' (Copjec, 1989) relation appears little different to Foucault's panoptic relation, or indeed, Mead's 'generalized other'. However, there is a distinct, *psychoanalytic* difference: the orthopsychic relation - in contrast to both the panoptic relation and the generalized other - assumes that it is just this objective survey which allows thought to become *secret and hidden* rather than fully visible and transparently accessible. However, this doesn't mean that a unique, pre-social, 'private self' comes upon a refuge in objectivity. Rather the orthopsychic relation indicates that the very possiblity of concealment is only established by the subject's objective relation to itself.

It is the very act of surveillance which makes it apparent that the subject is in a relation of 'extimacy' (Zizek, 1991) with itself, and which causes the subject to appear to itself as culpable, as guilty of hiding something. It is this ineradicable suspicion - that something is hidden - established by the objective relation which guarantees that thought will never achieve unity with the forms of discourse. Thought will be split, rather, between belief in what the discourse makes manifest, and suspicion about what it is hiding. In this way, the individual's psychical responses 'are translations of a collective symbolic system but are not in isomorphic relation to it' (Cousins, 1989: 79).

Rather than being a simple disjuncture which the subject can transcend by becoming more self-reflexive, this 'misrecognition' *founds* the subject. Instead of automatically penetrating the body without the aid of consciousness this disjuncture indicates the need for the social to be

translated into the psychical, for the symbolic to be articulated in the imaginary through the mechanisms of language and representation. Given the opacity of language - its metaphorical rather than indexical relation to the 'real' - the subject is inevitably 'split' from the 'real'. The fact 'that it is materially impossible to say the whole truth - that truth always backs away from language, that words always fall short of their goal - *founds* the subject' (Copjec, 1989: 69). Thus the opacity of language is the very cause of the subject's being, its desire.

The subject comes into existence, then, through a desire which is still an effect of discursive practice but *not* its realization. 'Desire cannot be a realization because it fulfills no possibility and has no content; it is rather occasioned by impossibility, the impossibility of the subject's ever coinciding with the real being from which representation cuts it off' (Copjec, 1989: 69). This thesis implies that every process of identification conferring upon the subject a fixed socio-symbolic identity is ultimately doomed to fail (Zizek, 1989). However, because of this it is the stake of *fantasy* to provide 'moments of closure', to construct a vision of a fixed identity that does exist, an identity which is not split by an antagonistic division [11]. In other words, because the subject is always split or divided and cannot be integrated into the symbolic order, a sense of fullness, 'self-determination' or 'identity' can only be constructed and held together through fantasy. Fantasy functions as a construction, a suture, an imaginary scenario filling out the void between the subject and the Real (Zizek, 1989; Hall, 1992).

In this way psychoanalysis reveals that Cousins and Hussain's (1984:256) assumption concerning the 'always already differentiated' nature of the human material upon which technologies of individuation operate is not without foundation. The resistances and failures thrown up by the operation of these technologies can be seen to be related to the fact that the human material upon which they work is ineradicably 'split' .

Concluding remarks

In the first part of this chapter I delineated and critically examined three major sociological approaches to the study of work-based subjectivity and identity, and assessed the explanatory reach of each. In the second part of the chapter I attempted to indicate how certain fundamental weaknesses in the conceptualization of the subject proffered by each of these

sociological 'schools' might be avoided by taking the 'discursive turn'. This involved tracing some of the insights into the construction and regulation of subjectivity and identity contained within contemporary post-structuralist and post-marxist thought, and within psychoanalysis.

In the following chapter I will attempt to draw upon aspects of the fledgling discursive framework outlined above to examine the processes by which people are constituted discursively at work. In particular, I will try to indicate how various management discourses have 'made up' categories of work-based subject at different historical periods and to examine the ways in which these management discourses are linked to the political culture of the time.

Notes

1. For those working in the neo-weberian tradition, for example, the analysis of occupational identity and community was simply an aspect of this wider projct. See, for example, Goldthorpe et al, 1969.

2. Marx's conception of creative labour is predicated upon the model of artistic activity. As Gaukroger (1986: 305-308; Hunter, 1987; Taylor, 1989), for example, has indicated such a model was a familiar one in German Romanticism. In this model human development was conceived of in terms of an inner power which strived to realise and maintain its own shape and effectivity against outside forces. Without such striving or activity there could be no self-knowledge, because a person only came to know itself by expressing itself and recognising itself in that expression. One comes to know oneself not through introspection but through the products of one's own activity.

3. The 'action frame of reference' is an approach to social research 'which attempts to explore the work-community nexus and to show how socially generated and distributed aims, attitudes and values can account for work behaviour' (Rose, 1988: 251). The approach derives most of its founding assumptions from the methodological recommendations of Max Weber. Simply put, the weberian strategy of inquiry demands an attempt to distinguish *typical* social actors and *typical* patterns of action, but also the *meanings* actors typically attribute to their actions. The investigator deploying this approach therefore asssumes that social action is produced partly by reference to a set of meanings the actor shares with others.

Thus Goldthorpe et al. (1969) constructed a typology of social action based on three kinds of 'orientation to work'. The *instrumental orientation* of the 'privatized worker'; *the bureaucratic orientation* reflecting patterns the authors considered to be typical of those located amongst white-collar employees; and the solidaristic orientation inferred from the authors' understanding of 'traditional' working class employment and community relations, such as those of coal-mining and ship-building.

Although there are a large number of neo-weberian studies of occupational identity and community - Brown and Brannen, 1970a; 1970b; 1972; Davis, 1979; Hill, 1975; Newby, 1974 amongst others- I will concentrate here upon the most influential of all such studies, *The Affluent Worker* project.

4. This relationship between marxist analyses and those of the neo-weberians throws into stark relief the continual gravitation between one or other pole of the subject/object, action/structure dualisms within sociaology in general, and industrial sociology in particular.

5. The 'traditional model' is constituted by a number of inter-linking factors. First: an 'unrationalised' work situation which is deemed to provide interesting tasks, freedom from managerial and technical constraints, and teamwork. The important life-style elements concern the structure of the family and community existence. 'Traditional' workers live in occupational communities of workmates who are also neighbours and friends, in single-class areas which are geographically and socially isolated from the mainstream of society, in stable and long-established communities. By contrast, in the 'bureaucratic' model employees are deemed to hold a 'hierarchical ideology' relating to expectations of upward mobility. However, they do find work 'intrinsically satisfying' and are more highly involved in their jobs than most industrial workers, and they do identify with the aims and objectives of the firms for whom they work. Because of this degree of job involvement they are also considered more likely to form occupational communities:'this tendency should be more pronounced the more they are geographically mobile and thus the more they are dependent on friendships acquired through their occupational roles' (Lockwood, 1975: 29). 'Bureaucratic workers' are also more likely to live in occupationally mixed communities. Finally, these employees are likely to be involved in 'interactional status sytems': whether social visiting or membership of and participation in voluntary associations is taken as a measure of communal (and hence status) interaction, the 'bureaucratic' worker ranks much higher than any of the other ideal types. (Lockwood, 1975; Goldthorpe et al, 1969).

6. This is a point I shall be returning to in Chapter 4.

7. The term 'symbolic interactionism' was coined by H.Blumer in 1937. Although the term is used to describe several schools of thought I will be referring to the work of the so-called 'Chicago school'. I do not propose to examine the positivistic interactionism of M. Kuhn and the 'Iowa school'.

8. This view of social action as being constructed through an interpretative process has, as its methodological consequence, the requirement that the process of construction be observed in order that the meaning of the social action can be analysed. The formation of action must be traced by viewing the situation as it is seen by the actor. Symbolic interactionists therefore stress the need for insightfully 'feeling one's way inside the experience of the actor'. This leads interactionists to reject the deployment of scientific method (in other words, to the prior formulation and testing of hypotheses); of cause and effect models; of goals of predicting behaviour; of the use of statistical techniques, and of the reverential attitude towards the ideal of scientific objectivity. Instead, they have tended to deploy the qualitative technique of participant observation whereby the sociologist inserts him/herself into the research setting, permitting him/her to record and experience events as they unfold.

However, this technique is inherently problematic. On the one hand, as 'observer' the sociologist must survey social life from without, treating it in a manner which is unfamiliar and disturbing to ordinary experience. On the other, as a participant he/she must attempt to merge with the world around him/her. For most part this tension is resolved in practice; in other words by formulating ideas and explanations *in situ*. According to Blumer (quoted in Stryker, 1980: 95) such an approach is 'more valuable many times over than any representative sample'.

9. As Robertson (1980:261) suggests

> 'American conceptions of identity within the symbolic interactionist tradition are...typically individualistic in reference to *a diffuse notion of otherness*...This

feature of American sociological conceptions of identity is of course bound-up with such attributes of American social theory (and, of course, American society) as the relative absence of attention to historically provided social niches. In this respect it is the absence of concern both sociologically and phenomenally with class stratification in the Eurpoean sense which is very important. The cultural commitment to equality (with categories declared to be 'fully American') has amounted to a commitment to the identity of all men (in the sense of their sameness in human terms). Against such a backdrop the search for personal and group identity is likely to be more intense than other societal circumstances where class stratification has been more crystallized.'

It is also interesting to note that the contemporary pragmatist project of Richard Rorty (1982; 1991) - firmly established as it is in 'the American context' - has come in for much of the same criticism levelled at symbolic interactionism in the past: the neglect of power relations, failure to deal adequately with structual inequality etc. See, for example, Bernstein (1991).

10. Although the concept of 'discourse' is often viewed as superceding the notion of 'ideology' (Foucault, 1980; Barrett, 1992), recent reformulations of the latter term have helped deprive it of many of its pejorative overtones - by indicating, for example, that ideologies do not have any necessary class or political 'belongingness' etc (Hall, 1988; Laclau, 1990; Zizek, 1989). As a result 'discourse' and 'ideology' have become virtually synonymous. Because of this transposition, evident, for example, in much post-marxist thought, both terms will be deployed throughout this thesis.

While the concept of 'discourse' is introduced here in a somewhat truncated form, the notion is developed throughout the first part of the thesis, from chapter to chapter. This initial discussion really functions to indicate, at an elementary level, how a discursive 'take' on subjectivity and identity differs from, and, to my mind, improves upon that contained within the three sociological approaches outlined above.

11. This psychoanalytic conception of subjectivity and identity is developed in more detail

towards the end of chapter three.

chapter three

governing the subject of work: management discourse and work-based subjectivity

Introduction

In his 1938 lecture on 'A Category of the Human Mind: the Notion of Person, the Notion of "Self"', Marcel Mauss (1979) articulated what was to become one of the most scandalous axioms of the social sciences: the idea that the 'person' or the 'self' is a culturally and historically malleable category. Since then, anthropological evidence and historical researches have indicated that the modern, western, 'idea' of the person as a largely coherent, rational, conscious, and self-directed being is 'a metaphysical fiction' (Beechey & Donald, 1986: x; Hirst & Woolley, 1982). As Mauss (1979: 90) argued 'Who knows if this "category", which all of us here today believe to be well founded, will always be recognized as such? It was formed only for us, among us'.

This argument regarding the contextual nature of identities can be applied without hesitation to the arena of work and employment. As Claude Lefort (1986: 142) has suggested, for example, the category of 'worker' does not connote some form of suprahistorical essence or 'spirit' - as the notion of 'alienation' appears to indicate - since it is, as Marx himself indicated, a 'product of *history*'. It only comes into being under certain historical and cultural conditions. Similarly, notions such as 'job satisfaction' and 'motivation' are not phenomena that exist in some timeless, universal realm waiting to be discovered by, and deployed within, managerial discourse. Both the basic concepts and the practices that bestow upon them a material reality are products of changes in the imagination and organization of work.

Given that any identity is basically relational in terms of its conditions of existence, any change in the latter is bound to affect the former. For example, if an employee's relations with his or her employing organization are discursively reconceptualized, then rather than having the same identity - the 'employee' - in a new situation, a new identity is established.

However, for some marxists the 'worker' is conceived as a transcendental *a priori* category representing the essence of every direct producer, 'whose historically differentiated forms in relation to the conditions of production would merely constitute empirical variations' (Laclau, 1990: 25). Hyman (1987: 40), for example, argues that 'shifting fashions in labour management' are purely and simply the outcome of an 'originary' antagonism between 'labour'

and 'capital'. In this vision, the identity of both 'labour' and 'capital' is invariably represented as stable and unchanging, while lived history is reduced to a series of 'empirical variations' on a constant theme. 'Labour' and 'capital' are conceived of as having an 'essential', 'real' identity that precedes or evades their dominant discursive articulation in any historical or cultural context. Needless to say, knowledge of this 'real' identity is only available to those armed with the appropriate 'gaze'.

For proponents of this sort of position, at the heart of modern work organization there lies an 'objectively' conflictual relationship. As Baldamus (1961: 105), for example, has put it

> as wages are costs to the firm, and the deprivation inherent in effort means costs to the employee, the interests of management and wage-earner are diametrically opposed.

At one pole there stand the 'workers'. With nothing to sell but their labour power, their 'interests' can easily be delineated. Failing the complete transformation of already existing social relations, worker's 'objective' interests lie in increasing wages, reducing working hours, minimizing 'effort', and imposing various constraints upon 'exploitation' by fighting for better conditions of employment and firmer legislative constraints upon the activities and ambitions of employers. At the opposite extreme are the employers and their 'servants of power', management and the experts of symbolic mediation - occupational psychologists and the like - who service them. Their 'objective' interests are linked to the perpetual expansion of profit through increasing productivity, deskilling work, keeping wages low, weakening the collective power of workers, and reducing their capacity to disrupt the process of accumulation, while simultaneously casting a cloak of 'ideological legitimacy' over the essentially exploitative nature of the employment relation (Braverman, 1974).

From this perspective it is obvious that nothing short of a wholesale transformation of 'society' will eradicate the 'alienation' residing at the heart of modern work. In this model, as I indicated in the previous chapter, work entails the subordination of subjectivity. For Hyman and others, any programmes and practices that attempt to re-organize business enterprises and the subjective experience of work without tackling the fundamental 'antagonism' between

'capital' and 'labour' must be little more than 'shifting fashions', because they are obviously on a hiding to nothing. How subjects are positioned by, and use, these programmes and practices is of no concern because the latter are perceived to have no effect in overcoming the 'objective' relations of alienation and exploitation.

However, for proponents of these 'shifting fashions', the worker's subjective experience of work *is* of central importance. The advocates of various discourses and practices of work reform - Human Relations, The Quality of Working Life Movement etc - claim to be able to restructure the employment relation so as to make work more subjectively meaningful for those performing it, while simultaneously increasing profitability. These different discourses of work represent the subjectivity of the worker not only as an object to be developed rather than repressed, but also as a crucial determinant of organizational success. Through the medium of a variety of different programmes and human 'technologies' - the use of human scientific knowledge to specify ways of doing things in a reproducible way - they have attempted to indicate that productive work can satisfy the worker, that the activity of working can provide empowering and fulfilling personal and social relations for those performing it, and that work is a route to self-fulfilment (Hollway, 1991; Rose, 1990).

As Rose (1990:56) has argued

> Employers and managers equipped with these new visions of work have thus claimed that there is no conflict between the pursuits of productivity, efficiency, and competitiveness on the one hand and the humanization of work on the other. On the contrary, the path to business success lies in engaging the employee with the goals of the company at the level of his or her subjectivity, aligning the wishes, needs, and aspirations of each individual who works for the organization with the successful pursuit of its objectives. Through striving to fulfil their own needs and wishes at work, each employee will thus work for the advance of the enterprise; the more the individual fulfils him or herself, the greater the benefit to the company.

While it is undoubtedly true that these discourses and practices of work reform have

played, and continue to play, an active part in reproducing hierarchies of power and reward at work, or that they have been consciously deployed at various times to attenuate the power of trade unions and their prerogatives for the representation of collective interests and the defence of collective 'rights', it is equally important to note that they are not simply 'ideological' distortions; in other words, that their claims to 'knowledge' are not 'false', nor do they serve a specific social function and answer to certain pre-formed economic needs. Certainly these discourses of work reform arise in specific political contexts, and have political consequences, but they are not merely functional responses to, or legitimations of, already existing economic interests or needs. Rather than simply reflecting a pre-given social world, they themselves actively 'make up' a reality, and create new ways for people to be at work. As Miller & O'Leary (1986) have argued the 'nature', or 'essence' of the internal world of the business enterprise is a function of changes in practices of governing economic life, rather than the converse.

'Managerial thought' and other discourses of work reform play an active role in the formation of new images and mechanisms, which bring the government of the enterprise into alignment with political rationalities, cultural values and social expectations (Rose, 1989). In the process, people come to identify themselves and conceive of their interests in terms of these new words and images and formulate their objectives in relation to them. Changes in the ways of conceptualizing, documenting and acting upon the internal world of the business organization actively transform the meaning and reality of work. As Rose (1990: 60) has suggested these new ways of relating the attributes and feelings of individual employees to the objectives of the organization for which they work are central elements in the 'fabrication of new languages and techniques to bind the worker into the productive life of society'.

Governing the work-based subject

If management discourses play an active role in attempts to 'govern' economic life through creating new ways for people to be at work, what exactly is the status of the term 'government' in this context ? Quite obviously 'government' is not equivalent to 'the Government' or 'the State', and yet, as Rose's comments suggest, various discourses of work reform appear to be

intimately linked to the political culture of the time. It is a shared 'governmental rationality' (Foucault, 1991) which provides this link.

According to Foucault (1980: 221) 'government' is a form of power referring to the 'conduct of conduct': 'to govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of actions of others'; that is to say, government is a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons. Government as an activity can concern the relation between self and self, private interpersonal relations involving some form of control or guidance, relations within social institutions and committees and, finally, relations concerned with the exercise of political sovereignty.

For Foucault, government is a 'discursive' activity. All forms of government rely upon a particular mode of representation: the development of a language for delineating and depicting a certain domain that claims both to capture the nature of the 'reality' represented, and, literally, to 're-present' it in a form suitable for deliberation, argumentation, scheming and intervention. Thus it is possible to see that the government of an economy, or of an organization, only becomes feasible through discursive practices that render the 'Real' comprehensible as a particular 'reality' with specific limits and distinct characteristics whose components are linked together in some relatively systematic fashion (Hacking, 1983) [1]. Particular programmes of intervention and rectification, and specific 'technologies of government' follow on from this rendering of the 'Real' into the domain of thought as a 'reality'.

However, 'government' isn't simply about the ordering of activities and processes, it is intimately concerned with subjectification: government operates through subjects. As Foucault (1980; 1982) argued, forms of power 'work' by constructing and maintaining the forms of subjectivity most appropriate to a given type of social practice/governmental rationality. Subjectivities are constituted by, and rendered instrumental to, a particular form of power through the medium of knowledges or technical *savoir faire* 'immanent to that form of power' (Minson, 1985: 44-45). Thus power works in - and - through subjectivity. Different governmental rationalities - attempts to invent and exercise different types of rule - are closely linked to conceptions and attributes of those to be governed. In other words, particular rationalities of government involve the construction of specific ways for people to be. In Ian

Hacking's (1986: 234) phrase they actively 'make up' people.

Because 'government' is a 'conduct of conduct', it presupposes rather than annuls the capacity of individuals as agents. As Foucault (1982: 221) suggests,

> when one defines the exercise of power as a mode of action upon the actions of others, when one characterizes theses actions by the government of men by other men (*sic*) - in the broadest sense of the term - one includes an important element: freedom. Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportements may be realized. Where the determining factors saturate the whole there is no relationship of power.

The relation between government and governed therefore depends upon an 'unstable conjuncture' - it is 'agonistic' - because this relation passes through the manner in which governed individuals are willing to exist as particular subjects. As Gordon (1991: 48) has suggested, 'to the extent that the governed are engaged, in their individuality, by the propositions and provisions of government, government makes it's own rationality intimately their affair'. In this sense, government is a very personal matter; it is bound up with 'ethics'. For Foucault (1984: 352) 'ethics' has a very particular meaning: 'the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself, *rapport a soi*...which determines how the individual is supposed to constitute himself (*sic*) as a moral subject of his own actions'. Ethics are thus conceived as means by which individuals come to understand and act upon themselves in relation to the true and the false, the permitted and the forbidden, the desirable and the undesirable (Rose, 1989).

As I indicated earlier, the government of economic life across the twentieth century has entailed a range of attempts to shape and regulate the relations that individuals have with society's productive apparatus. From 'Scientific Management' through 'Human Relations' up to and including the contemporary programmes of 'Excellence', the activities of individuals as 'workers' have become 'an object of knowledge and the target of expertise, and a complex web of relays has been formed through which the economic endeavours of politicians and

businessmen have been translated into the personal capacities and aspirations of subjects'(Miller & Rose, 1990:19). In other words, the identity of the 'worker' has been differentially constituted in the changing practices of governing economic life. 'Workers' and 'managers' have been 'made up' in different ways - discursively re-imagined and re-conceptualized - at different times through their positioning in a variety of discourses of work reform.

For the remainder of this chapter I will concentrate on the ways in which people are 'made up' at work in the present by exploring the contemporary management discourse of 'Excellence' and its relationship to the political rationality of 'Enterprise'. In particular, I will indicate how the expertise of Excellence provides the means whereby the politico-ethical objectives of neo-liberal government in the U.K. - or 'Thatcherism' as it has popularly been known - , the economic objectives of contemporary business and the self-actualizing and self-regulating capacties of human subjects are linked together into a functioning network.

Enterprise Culture and the discourse of Excellence

From the outset, the Thatcherite project not only involved an economic revival but also a moral crusade. As Margaret Thatcher herself argued, as early as 1975, 'serious as the economic challenge is, the political and moral challenge is just as grave, and perhaps more so, because economic problems never start with economics' (quoted in Hall, 1988: 85). It was the difficult, often faltering, attempt to weave these economic and moral strands together that produced the Enterprise Culture as the symbol and goal of Thatcherism.

Although the concept of an Enteprise Culture was not at all well-defined in policy terms when the Conservatives first won power in 1979, it has since become extremely important in 'justifying many of the policies the government has adopted, and in characterising the long term objectives of its programme and the kind of society it wants to see emerge' (Gamble, 1988: 137). Basically the government argued that the permissive and anti-enterprise culture that had been fostered by social democratic institutions since 1945 had become one of the most serious obstacles to reversing decline. The economic and moral regeneration of Britain

therefore necessitated exerting pressure on every institution to make it supportive of Enterprise.

In Britiain attempts to construct a culture of Enterprise have proceeded through the progressive enlargement of the territory of the market - the realm of private enterprise and economic rationality - by a series of re-definitions of its object. Thus the task of creating an 'Enterprise Culture' has involved the reconstruction of a wide range of institutions and activities along the lines of the commercial business organization, with attention focused, in particular, on its orientation towards 'the sovereign consumer'. At the same time, however, the market has also come to define the sort of relation an individual should have with him/herself, and the 'habits of action' he or she should acquire and exhibit. Enterprise refers here to the 'kind of action or project' that exhibits 'enterprising' qualities or characterisitcs on the part of individuals or groups. In this latter sense an 'Enterprise Culture' is one in which certain enterprising qualities - such as self-reliance, personal responsibility, boldness, and a willingness to take risks in the pursuit of goals - are regarded as human virtues and promoted as such. As Keat (1990: 3-4) has indicated, in the contemporary discourse of Enterprise these two strands - the 'institutional' and the 'ethical' - are intricately interwoven.

> on the one hand, the conduct of commercial enterprises is presented as a (indeed the) primary field of activity in which enterprising qualities are displayed. And given that these qualities are themselves regarded as intrinsically desirable...this serves to valorize engagement in such activities and hence, more generally, the workings of a free market economy. On the other hand, however, it is also claimed that in order to maximise the benefits of this economic system, commercial enterprises must themselves be encouraged to be enterprising, ie. to act in ways that fully express these qualities. In other words, it seems to be acknowledged that 'enterprises are not fully enterprising', and enterprising qualities are thus given an instrumental value in relation to the optimal performance of a market economy.

According to Colin Gordon (1991: 43), Enterprise has become an approach capable, in principle, 'of addressing the totality of human behaviour, and thus, of envisaging a coherent, purely economic method of programming the totality of governmental action'. In other words,

Enterprise can be understood to constitute a particular form of 'governmental rationality' (Foucault, 1991). As such it is not simply reducible to the politico-ethical project of Thatcherism. Rather than having an 'originary' essence in, and unique 'belongingness' to, the policies of successive Conservative administrations, the rationality of Enterprise permeates a plethora of discourses, programmes and technologies developed outside the field of formal or 'official' Government. For example, one area in which the vocabulary of Enterprise has played a central structuring role is in management discourse.

According to Wood (1989: 387), one of the most distinctive features of 'new wave management' is the shift it attempts to initiate from 'reactive to proactive postures', from 'bureaucratic' to 'entrepreneurial styles of management' and, possibly most importantly, the new forms of work-based identity it tries to forge amongst all members of an organization. For Wood, the appeal of the new management discourse of 'Excellence' has as much, if not more, to do with the *cultural* reconstruction of work-based identities as with the 'values of the technologies or organizational forms they propose'.

As Wood's comments indicate, one of the key elements in the contemporary discourse of work reform is the attention devoted to questions of 'culture' and 'identity'. A cursory inspection of any number of recent management texts reveals the primacy accorded to 'culture change programmes' as panaceas for all manner of organizational ills (Peters & Waterman, 1982; Ouchi, 1981; Kanter, 1990; Peters, 1987) [2]. In this literature 'culture' is paramount because it is seen to structure the way people think, make decisions and act in organizations. 'Culture' is represented as an answer to the problems thrown up by the increasingly dislocated ground upon which globalized capitalism operates. As Laclau (1990: 56), for example, has argued, the less organizations are able to rely upon a framework of stable social and political relations, the more they are forced to engage in a project of 'hegemonic construction'. In other words, the effects of dislocation require constant 'creativity', and the continuous construction of collective operational space that rests less on inherited objective forms (bureaucracy) and more on *cultural* reconstruction. Thus 'new wave management' is concerned with changing people's value's norms, and attitudes so they make the 'right' and necessary contribution to the success of the organization for which they work. To this end 'Excellence' encourages

managers to view the most 'effective' and 'excellent' organizations as those with 'strong cultures' - patterns of meaning which enable all members of an organizaton to *identify* with the goals and objectives of the company for which they work.

According to Deleuze (1992:3), amongst others, the corporation only becomes 'cultural' - develops a 'soul' - once 'the market' has achieved a position of pre-eminence. The discourse of 'Excellence' is therefore both symptom and effect of the increasing de-differentiation of Economy and Culture. As Jameson (1990:29) has argued, the colonization of 'Culture' by the market does not imply the disappearance or extinction of the cultural, rather it suggests a situation in which 'the corporate is now at one with culture'.

In effect, the 'institutional' and 'ethical' imperatives propounded by the advocates of Excellence are very similar to those proclaimed within the Thatcherite project: economic and moral revival through a programme of 'cultural change'. Like Thatcherism, the 'Search for Excellence' requires a veritable 'cultural revolution', one in which organizations and their members learn to 'thrive on chaos' (in the decentred global free-market economy) and to renew continually their enterprising spirit. Thus, the vocabulary of Enterprise is a central structuring element in both of these projects. However, as I indicated above, 'Excellence' is not reducible to 'Thatcherism at Work'. Although the discourse of Enterprise, and contemporary attempts to create an Enterprise Culture in the U.K. are virtually synonymous with the politico-ethical project of Thatcherism, they are not reducible to this phenomenon. Rather, Enterprise as a 'governmental rationality' has entered people's daily lives in a number of ways not directly related to the policy initiatives of successive Conservative administrations (Robins, 1991; Held, 1991). At the same time, this also suggests that the removal of Margaret Thatcher from office in no way heralded the end of the project of Enterprise. Indeed, as Hall (1991:10) has recently argued, the 'entrepreneurial revolution' to which Thatcherism contributed with such passionate brutality 'is still working its way through the system'.

Although the *cultural reconstruction of identity* is central to the Excellence project, contemporary management discourse has been largely ignored within cultural analysis. Morris (1988: 22-23) has recently provided a convincing explanation for this neglect. According to her, there is a marked tendency within much cultural studies to assume that somehow the 'economic' sphere has already been accounted for. Within this tradition a potentially de-

alienated sphere of 'consumption' is often counterposed to an alienated, deskilled and already determined world of paid employment. So while cultural analysis has paid considerable attention to the 'pleasures' of and 'play' of identities within contemporary cultures of consumption, it has tended to relegate the world of work and employment 'to the realm of the *deja vu*'.

Meanwhile, within the sociology of work and employment, for example, where 'economic life' is the central focus, the Excellence phenomenon has been accorded some considerable, though narrowly focused, attention. But while its theoretical underpinnings have been criticized, its empirical incidence debated, and its internal contradictions exposed (Storey, 1989), there has been little notice paid to the subjectivizing aspects of the Excellence project, and their relationship to the politico-ethical objectives of neo-liberal government in the U.K. However, as I argued above, questions of discourse, subjectivity and identity have a key role to play in understanding the Excellence phenomenon and its linkage to the governmental rationality of Enterprise.

work-based identity and management discourse

A concern with the production of particular work-based identities is not unique to contemporary management discourse. As I argued earlier, throughout the present century multifarious schemes have been advocated by a plethora of 'schools of thought' which attempt, both consciously and unconsciously, to eradicate conflict and contestability from organizational life through 'integrating' the work-based human subject and the organization. This objective can be seen to underlie such seemingly diverse approaches as Mayoite Human Relations (Mayo, 1949; Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939), the 'Organizational Psycho-Technologists' (Herzberg, 1968; McGregor, 1960; Argyris, 1957), and the Quality of Working Life Movement (Davis & Cherns, 1975), for example. Each of these projects assumed that it was possible (and indeed necessary) to reconcile the needs and desires of management and workers through the deployment of their own particular 'expertise'. In effect, whether articulated in terms of a 'need' for 'belongingness' (Mayo et al.), or as a desire for 'self-actualisation'

(Herzberg et al.), what unites all of these projects is a concern with the production and regulation of particular work-based subjectivities.

According to Miller and Rose (1988: 172) these various schools of thought construct

> images of the enterprise, techniques of management, forms of authority, and conceptions of the social vocation of industry which can align the government of the enterprise with the prevailing cultural values, social expectations, political concerns and personal ambitions... They have provided means for linking together changing political rationalities and objectives, the ceaseless quest of business for profitability and a basis for managerial authority, with interventions aimed at the subjectivity of the worker.

The Excellence project is firmly established on this trajectory. It follows in the footsteps of its predecessors in seeking to construct a vision of the enterprise as an 'organic entity', but it does so through the articulation of a new vocabulary of the employment relationship in which the worker's relation to his or her work is re-imagined in line with prevailing ethical systems, political rationalities, and, of course, the profitability imperative. Within the discourse of Excellence the internal world of the enterprise is re-conceptualized as one in which productivity is to be improved, production and service quality assured, 'flexibility' enhanced, and innovation developed through the active engagement of the self-fulfilling impulses of all the organization's members' (Rose, 1989: 16).

Some critics of Excellence within the social sciences have emphasised the similarities between contemporary management discourse and previous programmes of work reform, and, in particular, its close resemblance to the Human Relations school (Turner, 1986; Silver, 1987). However, by concentrating almost exclusively on 'continuity' and 'homogeneity' within management discourse, these critics tend to downgrade the new ways for people to be at work present within the contemporary discursive formation. Within the Human Relations tradition, for example, the worker is considered, first and foremost, as a *social* creature seeking fulfilment of his or her needs for 'belongingness' in the group relations of the workplace. With the contemporary 'entrepreneurial order' (Miller & O'Leary, 1986),

however, the worker is represented as an *individual* in search of *meaning* in work, and wanting to achieve fulfilment through work. Excellent organizations are those that 'make meaning for people' by encouraging them to believe that they have control over their own destinies; that no matter what position they may hold in an organization their contribtuion is vital, not only to the success of the company for which they work, *but also to the enterprise of their own lives.* Peters and Waterman (1982: 81, 56), for example, approvingly quote Nietzche's axiom that 'he (*sic*) who has a *why* to live for can bear most any *how*'. They argue that 'the fact...that we think we have a bit more discretion leads to much greater commitment' and that 'we desperately need meaning in our lives, and will sacrifice a great deal to institutions that will provide meaning for us. We simultaneously need independence, to feel as though we are in charge of our destinies, and to have the ability to stick out'. In this vision, work is a sphere within which the individual constructs and confirms their identity. 'Excellent' organizations get the most out of their employees, not by manipulating group human relations to secure a sense of 'belonging', but by harnessing 'the psychological striving of individuals for autonomy and creativity and channelling them into the search of the firm for excellence and success' (Miller & Rose, 1990: 26).

In other words, 'Excellent' companies seek to cultivate 'Enterprising subjects' - autonomous, self-regulating, productive individuals (Gordon, 1987; Rose, 1989; 1990). Here, Enterprise refers to those plethora of 'rules of conduct' for everyday life mentioned earlier: energy, initiative, self-reliance and personal responsibility etc. This 'Enterprising self' is a calculating self; a self that 'calculates <u>about</u> itself, and that works <u>upon</u> itself in order to better itself' (Rose, 1989:7-8). Thus Enterprise designates a form of rule that is intrinsically 'ethical' in Foucault's sense of the term: good government is to be grounded in the ways individuals govern themselves; as well as inherently 'economic', enterprising self-regulation accords well with Jeremy Bentham's rallying cry of 'Cheap Government!'

For Peters and Waterman (1982: 238-239) Excellent organizations are those which create a 'powerful focus of identification' by activating the individual's capacities for 'self-motivation' and 'enterprise'

there was hardly a more pervasive theme in the excellent companies than *respect for the individual.* That basic belief and assumption were omnipresent...what makes it live at these companies is a plethora of structural devices, sytems, styles and values all re-inforcing one another so that the companies are truly unusual in their ability to achieve extraordinary results through ordinary people...These companies give people control over their destinies; they make meaning for people. They turn the average Joe or Jane into winners. They let, even insist that, people stick out. They accentuate the positive.

For the advocates of Excellence, governing the organization in an 'Enterprising' manner requires a judicious mixture of centralized control and individual autonomy. According to Peters and Waterman (1982: 318), Excellent companies must be 'simultaneously loose and tight': 'organizations that live by the loose/tight principle are on the one hand rigidly controlled, yet at the same time allow (indeed, insist on) autonomy, entrepreneurship, and innovaton from the rank and file'. Thus the Excellent firm is one that engages in a *controlled de-control*, or, to deploy Foucault's (1988b) terminology, one that 'totalizes' and 'individualizes' at one and the same time.

According to its proponents, the key to 'loose/tight' is 'culture': the effective management of symbols, meanings, beliefs and values is held to transform an apparent contradiction - between increasing central control while extending individual accountability and responsibility - into 'no contradiction at all' (Peters & Waterman, 1982: 321). If an organization has an appropriate 'culture' of Excellence, if all its members adopt an 'Enterprising' relationship to self, then efficiency, economy, autonomy, quality and innovation all 'become words that belong on the same side of the coin' (Peters & Waterman, 1982: 321).

Although the recourse to 'culture' by advocates of 'Excellence' is often criticised within the social sciences for its 'remarkable vagueness' (Howard, 1985), Peters (I98:404), for example, is adamant that the 'corporate culture' only finds life 'in details, not broad strokes'. In other words, the 'culture' of the business enterprise is only operationalized through particular practices and technologies - through 'specific measures' (Hunter, 1987).

Rather than being some vague, incalculable 'spirit', the culture of Enterprise is inscribed

into a variety of mechanisms - application forms, recruitment 'auditions', communication groups and the like - through which senior management in 'Excellent' companies seek to delineate, normalize and instrumentalize the conduct of persons in order to achieve the ends they postulate as desirable. Thus, governing the business organization in an Excellent manner involves cultivating enterprising subjects through the development of an (simultaneous loose/tight) 'enabling and empowering vision' (Peters, 1987) articulated in the everyday practices of the organization.

the 'Enterprising' subjects of 'Excellence'

According to the doyenne of contemporary management discourse, Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1990:9-10), 'by 1983' the figure of the entrepreneur had become 'the new culture hero' of the western world. According to Kanter the term 'entrepreneur' no longer simply implied the formation of an independent business venture, rather it had traversed its traditional limits and now referred to the application of 'entrepreneurial principles to the traditional corporation, creating a marriage between entrepreneurial creativity and corporate discipline, cooperation and teamwork' [3]. This 'intrapreneurial' or 'post-entrepreneurial' ("because it takes entrepreneurship a stage further") 'revolution' therefore provides the possibility for every member of an organization to express 'individual initiative' and to fully develop their 'potential' in the service of the corporation. In effect, enterprising Excellence offers the individual the opportunity to feel 'in business for oneself inside the modern corporation', and therefore the all important experience of 'ownership' (Pinchot, 1985; Kanter, 1990; Sabel, 1990).

Hence, while 'Enterprise' still designates an economic form, it also indicates a category of activity to be encouraged by specific programmes of intervention and rectification in economic life, and a certain way in which aspects of economic, social and cultural life should be 'problematized and programmed' (Rose, 1989:3-4). Problems are conceptualised in terms of a 'lack of Enterprise'; the solutions to which are to be found by actively fostering and utilising the 'enterprising capacities' of individuals, 'encouraging them to conduct themselves with boldness and vigour, and to drive themselves hard to accept risks in the pursuit of goals'

(Rose, 1989: 3-4). Individuals are deemed capable of identifying themselves with the goals and objectives of their employing organization to the extent that they interpret them as both dependent upon and enhancing their own skills of self-development, self-presentation, self-direction, and self-management.

The enterprising vision of 'Excellence' provides a novel image of the worker, the organization, and their relationship one with the other. It posits a 'post-hierarchical', entrepreneurial future where the 'old bureaucratic' emphasis on order, uniformity and repetition is gradually replaced by an entrepreneurial emphasis on 'can do' creativity (Kanter, 1990; Boyne, 1990)[4]. The choice presented is stark: to survive in the dislocated, decentred, increasingly competitive and chaotic global economy 'companies must either move away from bureaucratic guarantees to post-entrepreneurial flexibility or...stagnate' (Kanter, 1990: 356). The message clear: organizations must shift from 'formality' to 'flexibility' in all their activities and relations. 'Formal rules' as to how work should be done must be replaced by 'implicit expectations' as to how work should be done. This requires that every employee make the goals and objectives of his or her employing organization their own personal goals and objectives, thus ensuring that he or she will deploy their 'autonomy' and 'creativity' correctly from the organization's point of view. Hence, again, there is the insistence on the construction and promulgation of a 'strong corporate culture' which reconciles the autonomous aspirations of the self-steering individual employee with the collective entrepreneurialism of the flexible corporation. According to Peters and Waterman (1982: 72)

> virtually all the excellent companies are driven by just a few key values, and then give lots of space to employees to take initiatives in support of these values - finding their own paths, and so making the task their own.

Thus the 'expertise' of Excellence provides techniques for mapping the cultural world of the business organization in terms of its success in engaging with and building upon the motivations and aspirations of its inhabitants. Through the medium of various technologies and practices inscribed with the presuppositions of the Enterprising self - techniques for reducing dependency by reorganizing management structures ('de-layering'); for cutting across

internal organizational boundaries (the creation of 'special project teams', for example); for encouraging internal competitiveness through small group working; and for eliciting individual accountability and personal responsibility through peer-review and performance appraisal schemes etc - the internal world of the business organization is re-conceptualized as one in which customers demands are satisfied, productivity enhanced, quality assured, innovation fostered, and flexibility guaranteed through the active engagement of the self-fulfilling impulses of all the organization's members. In this way, the autonomous subjectivity of the productive individual has become a central economic resource; that is the 'strategic human resource' (Storey, 1989).

Within the discourse of Excellence, work is characterised not as a painful obligation imposed upon individuals, nor as an activity only undertaken by people for the fulfilment of instrumental needs and satisfactions. Work is itself a means for self-fulfilment, and the road to company profit is also the path to individual self-development and growth.

In this way, the worker is made 'subject', in that he or she is both 'subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his (*sic*) own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and make subject to' (Foucault, 1982: 212). In other words, a person's sense of who and what they are is constituted and confirmed through their positioning within particular relations of power. These relations are both 'technological' and 'economical': 'technological', in that they are exercised in and through specific 'knowledges'; 'economical' in that their effect is to create and sustain a 'self-governing' subject. According to Gordon (1991:44), Enterprise is the contemporary 'care of the self' which government commends as the corrective to collective greed.

As Foucault (1988c: 92) has argued, the exercise of power 'depends on an unstable conjuncture'. Power is always productive, not merely repressive of culture. And it is precisely the positive aspects of power/knowledge relations which makes them so plausible, so effective/seductive. Thus, the 'expertise' of Excellence can be seen to play the role of 'cypher' between people's evaluations of themselves and the 'programmatic' apirations of economic authorities (Rose, 1990). The 'power' of this 'expertise' lies in its promise of an effectiveness lodged in objectivity, and its manifest commitment to people's sense of who and what they are.

As Rose (1989; 1990), for example, has argued, expertise is constitutive of subjectivity. Its languages permeate people's ways of thinking, its judgements enter into people's evaluations, and its norms into their calculations. At the very moment when they aspire to freedom and try to realise autonomy, people are bound not only to expert knowledge but to the project of their own identities.

Thus the establishment of 'connections' and 'symmetries' between the self-development of the worker and the increased competitiveness and flexibility of the corporation

> enables an alignment to take place between the technologies of work and the technologies of subjectivity. For the entrepreneurial self, work is no longer necessarily a constraint upon the freedom of the individual to fulfil his or her potential through strivngs for autonomy, creativity and responsibility. Work is an essential element in the path to self-realization...The government of work now passes through the psychological strivings of each and every individual for self-fulfilment (Miller & Rose, 1990; 27).

Enterprise, Excellence, Thatcherism

It is now possible to see how the language of Enterprise does not simply attempt to fashion the way owners and managers of capital calculate and activate business strategies in the marketplace, it is also inscribed within contemporary management discourse where it has been formulated into a series of technologies of regulation for governing the internal life of the modern corporation in order to secure business success. This success is premised upon an engagement by the organization of the 'self-fulfilling impulses' of all its individual employees, no matter their role within the enterprise. Excellence plays the role of 'relay' between objectives that are economically desirable and those that are personally seductive, 'teaching the arts of self-realization that will enhance employees as individuals as well as workers' (Rose, 1989: 16). The discourse of Excellence brooks no opposition between the mode of self-presentation required of managers and employees, and the ethics of the personal self. Becoming a better worker is represented as the same thing as becoming a more virtuous

person, a better self. In other words, within the discourse of Excellence, *technologies of power* - 'which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject' - and *technologies of the self* - 'which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality' - are imperceptibly merged (Foucault, 1988a: 18). The values of self-realization, of personal responsibility, of 'ownership', accountability and self-management are both personally attractive and economically desirable.

This 'autonomisation' and 'responsibilisation' of the self, the instilling of a reflexive self-monitoring which will afford self-knowledge and therefore, self-mastery, makes paid work (no matter how 'objectively' alienated, deskilled, or degraded it may appear to social scientists) an essential element in the path to self-fulfilment and provides the *a priori* that links together work and non-work life. The 'employee', just as much as the 'sovereign consumer', is represented as an individual in search of meaning and fulfilment, one looking to 'add value' in every sphere of existence. Paid work and consumption are just different playing grounds for the same activity; that is, different terrains upon which the enterprising self seeks to master, better and fulfil itself. In the discourse of Excellence the relations between 'production', 'consumption', between the 'inside' and 'outside' of the corporation, and, crucially, between work and non-work based identities, are progressively blurred (Sabel, 1990).

However, the 'expertise' of Excellence doesn't just act as a 'relay' between the self-steering capacities of subjects and the goals of industry, it also plays a vital 'translating role' between the government of the enterprise and the politico-ethical objectives of neo-liberal government in the U.K. Through deployment of the vocabulary of Enterprise, contemporary management discourse establishes 'connections and symmetries' between the concerns of owners and managers of capital to maximise the performance and productivity of their organizations, political concerns about the government of the productive, moral and cultural life of the 'Nation', and techniques for the government of the subject. Excellence helps link these together into a 'functioning network' (Miller & Rose, 1990: 26-27).

Thus the Thatcherite belief that Britian's moral and economic regeneration can only come about through the destruction of the 'dependency culture' and its replacement by a culture of Enterprise is mirrored almost exactly in the logic of Excellence. What is seen as an increasingly competitive and chaotic global free market 'that can't be bucked' demands that the corporation - like the State - shed its 'dependency mentality' and cultivate some 'entrepreneurial spirit'. 'The traditional corporation is in such turmoil that it can no longer carry the weight of...society's expectations of permanence, to which a variety of welfare benefits are tied'(Kanter, 1990: 357).

According to the Confederation of British Industry (1988: 59-60), for example, the 'productivity imperative' calls for a restructured corporation with 'lower manning levels and more flexible and wider job specification'. In turn, this is deemed to require 'a necessary parallel change...towards greater individual responsibility on the part of all employees and, in consequence, the development of self-management at all levels'. Again the message is clear: 'the free ride is over, you're on your own'. From now on its up to individuals to secure their own future through their own efforts. In 'post-entrepreneurial' times people's careers

> are more dependent on their own resources...This means that some people who know only bureaucratic ropes are cut adrift. It means that incomes are likely to fluctuate rather than increase in an orderly fashion every year...It means more risk and uncertainty...No longer counting on the corporation requires people to build resources in themselves, which ultimately could result in more resourceful people (Kanter, 1990: 357-358).

The asumption is that 'post-entrepreneurial strategies are more motivating for people' because they allow everyone the opportunity to be in business for themselves 'inside...the large corporation'. The promise is that the corporation itself 'should reap benefits too, in increased productivity' (Kanter, 1990: 357-358).

This vision of the corporation again echoes familiar ('organic') theories of society. According to critical management theorists such as Legge, Storey, and Sisson (1989), 'new wave' management discourse is really 'no more or less than a reflection of the rise of the new

right - whether in the U.K. or the U.S.A.'. For Legge (1989:40), Excellence provides that 'different language' which 'our new enterprise culture demands...one that asserts management's right to manipulate *and* ability to generate and develop resources'. Indeed, as Storey and Sisson (1989:168-172) have indicated, 'the powerful advocacy of the "excellence literature" has been supported massively by the government and its agencies' - for example through the Department of Trade and Industry's (the Department of Enterprise as Lord Young referred to it) 'Enterprise Initiative'. Nonetheless, despite this committed promulgation, they continue, the facts suggest that the 'Excellence vision is not being adopted in most organizations'. So, whilst they acknowledge the importance of contemporary management discourse in articulating 'a coherent and convincing *weltanshauung*', they still posit an enormous gap between representation and reality.

Interestingly, it is a self-styled 'post-marxist', Andre Gorz, who takes this view of contemporary developments to its logical conclusion. Gorz (1989: 66) argues that contemporary images of the enterprise

> as a place where employees can achieve personal fulfilment is...an essentially ideological invention. It conceals the real transformations that have taken place, namely that enterprises are replacing labour by machines, producing more and better with a decreasing percentage of the workforce previously employed, and offereing privileges to a chosen elite of workers, which are accompanied by unemployment, precarious employment, deskilling and lack of job security for the majority.

While the 'transformations' Gorz refers to are 'real' enough, they are never just given, as he seems to imply, but are always discursively constituted. Unlike many other post-marxists (Hall, 1988; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Zizek, 1989), Gorz views ideology as simply a negative force, hiding or distorting a more 'truthful'reality. Thus the desire to establish a clear and transparent relationship between the socially active signifier and the real relations to which it might refer is expressed in a vocabulary of truth and falsity: ideology is a simulacrum, it

disguises, travesties and blurs reality and 'real' relations.

In a very orthodox (and extremely non-post-marxist) fashion, any acknowledgement of the ideological status of Excellence can also be seen to be, at one and the same time, a condemnation. As a counterweight to the 'essentially ideological' (whatever that is), Gorz appears to invite the reader to view instead what is actually (ie. non-ideologically) happening on the ground by taking a close look at 'real' material circumstances. Nonetheless, while it is undoubtedly true that 'material circumstances' matter profoundly, these circumstances are always 'ideologically' (ie. discursively) defined. The subjects of ideology are never unified and integral selves, however; they are 'fractured, always in process and strangely composite' (Hall, 1988: 9-10). People make identifications symbolically, through social imagery, in their imaginations. To maintain a totally perjorative attitude towards ideology, to refer to it as a con-trick, distortion, or simply as a marginal or secondary concern, leads to a certain neglect of, Reich's words, "what goes on in people's heads" (Smith,1988).

Enterprise and Excellence: ideology/antagonism/fantasy

As I have indicated, questions of ideology/discourse are absolutely central to the Excellence project, and cannot be regarded as secondary or dependent factors. Ideology has 'real', 'material' effects which cannot be reduced to, or simply read as, the 'reflexive' accounts of some 'original' or determining factor. As Hall (1988: 9-10) has indicated, 'all economic and political processes have ideological "conditions of existence".

Like the Thatcherite project of an Enterprise Culture, Excellence is an attempt to redefine and reconstruct the economic/cultural terrain, and to 'win' social subjects to a new conception of themselves - to turn them into 'winnners', 'champions' and 'everyday heroes'. As Wood (1989) has argued, Excellence is about the politics of identity; contemporary management discourse attempts to enable all sorts of people, from highest executive to lowliest shop-floor employee, to see themselves reflected in the emerging conception of the 'enterprising organization', and thus to come increasingly to identify with it. In this sense, Excellence can be conceptualised not only as 'cultural technology' (Hunter, 1987), but also as 'organic ideology'; as attempting to articulate into a configuration different subjects, different identities

and different aspirations.

To appeal to the 'logical contradictions' of contemporary management discourse, and to the even more basic underlying 'contradictions of capitalism' (Legge, 1989: 43; Hyman, 1987), in order to show that this project can never 'really work' is to misunderstand the ways in which ideology operates. For ideology doesn't 'work' in a logical intellectual fashion. It doesn't collapse as the result of a logical contradiction because it does not obey the logic of rational discourse (Hall, 1988; Zizek, 1991). Rather it is closer in discursive structure to the logic of the 'dream-work' than to that of analytic rationalism (Hall, 1988: 86). As Wright (1987: 8) has commented, 'management thinking is superior to merely rational science in that it brings the lifeworld along with it. It entails no break with everyday experience; there is no question of having to "save the appearances" after meaning and scientific truth have taken off into a realm of their own'.

The discourse/ideology of Excellence connects across different positions and divergent terrains, betwen seemingly disparate, and often contradictory ideas. Just like 'Thatcherism', Excellence is 'multifaceted' - operating on several fronts at one and the same time, linking together diverse strands into a 'functioning network' (Hall, 1988: 166; Miller & Rose, 1990). Arm in arm with the New Right, Excellence has unfolded a positive conception of the Enterprise Culture which it would be dangerous to dismiss simply as 'hype' or a 'fad. Through deployment of the vocabulary of 'Enterprise', Excellence appears to have established a 'translatability' between the economic objectives of employers and managers of capital, changing political rationalities, and the desires of the self.

Exactly whose identities are being discussed here? At one level it is quite clearly the 'character'of the 'Manager' (MacIntyre, 1985) at whom these 'technologies of the self' are aimed. After all, its managerial staff, rather than more lower level employees who have sustained the remarkable sales figures of the Excellence literature and attended the screenings of Tom Peter's *A Passion for Excellence* video (a very common event throughout a wide range of British companies in recent years). For the manager there is tangible sense in which economic success, career progress, and personal development intersect in this new expertise of autonomous subjectivity: the closer to the centre of the 'organizational network' you are located, the more likely it still is that the interests of organizational development and 'personal'

development coincide. In turn, this suggests that not all employees will be subjects in the new regime of the self. Those on the 'margins', or, in this case, the 'periphery', continue to be governed in more visible, and less subtle ways; subject to 'coercion' rather than 'seduction' (Bauman, 1988; Rose, 1989). Nevertheless, Excellence *is* explicitly aimed at everyone. No matter what role they perform within an organization, it is argued, everybody can and will benefit from cultivating some 'enterprising spirit' and aspiring to Excellence. That is how they can become virtuous, resourceful, and 'empowered' human beings, so the argument goes.

Excellence is very much a crusade, promulgating the faith that everyone can be 'won over'. Almost all the 'new cultural intermediaries', or 'experts', of Excellence firmly reject the idea that 'culture change' at work is only enabling for a minority of the workforce. Instead they appear to believe that the interventions they propose in the internal world of the economic enterprise will transform what was previously a minority experience into the life of the majority. This is particularly true in relation to the notion of 'self' they encourage all workers to adopt. 'Self-management' is the key here: 'how to handle yourself to your own best advantage' (Kanter, 1990). The cultural intermediaries of Excellence advise all workers to 'make a project of themselves' (Bourdieu, 1984; Featherstone, 1987; Bonner & du Gay, 1992). In other words to work on their relations with employment, and all other areas of their lives, in order to develop a 'lifestyle' which will maximise the worth of their existence to themselves [5].

According to some commentators (Townley, 1989), technologies of regulation based on this faith in Excellence are being deployed more extensively by employers to cover a much wider range of employees. More systematic selection and appraisal technologies - personality profiling and psychometric testing, biodata, and performance related reviews - are being targeted at sections of the workforce they had not previously covered. As Townley (1989: 93-98) has noted, 'no longer confined to managerial levels, careful selection screening, and regular formal monitoring of performance are increasingly becoming the experience of those at lower levels of the organizational hierarchy, especially blue-collar employees'. These developments are interpreted as expressing an increasing concern amongst employers with the behavioural and attitudinal characteristics of the employee as an *individual*. The more

extensive deployment of technologies of regulation can be seen therefore as a 'strategic' response by employers to the problems of government involved in the 'move away from the direct and technical supervision of work, to the greater degree of "discretion", or "flexibility", being devolved to the individual..' (Townley, 1989: 93-98).

Although enormous gaps remain between the programmatic aspirations of employers and managers, and the actual 'usage' (or 'consumption') of these technologies in the practice of everyday working life by those at whom they are aimed, this does not mean that the whole entrepreneurial edifice of Excellence' can be dismissed with disdain as yet another failure. Government is an inherently sisphyean endeavour. The impossibility of government is the very motor of the 'will to govern'. What is important here is the establishing of those 'connections and symmetries' described by Miller and Rose (1990) between changing political rationalities and objectives, the profitability imperatives of contemporary business, and interventions aimed at the subjectivity of the employee.

Since work-based identity can no longer be guaranteed in any foundational sense by 'class position', or by the 'mode of production' of themselves (Hall, 1988; Laclau, 1990), the 'subjective' moment becomes central politically, culturally, and ideologically. The project of reconstruction advocated by the experts of 'Excellence' is not some side-show to the main event of global economic restructuring, rather it is an essential element in the very process of restructuring itself. As Laclau (1990: 56), for example, has argued, 'the more dislocated is the ground on which capitalism operates, the less it can rely on a stable framework of stable social and political relations' and the more central becomes the cultural moment of 'hegemonic construction'. Excellence attempts to redefine the terms in which the social relations of work and employment are imagined. For unless people identify with and become subjects of a new conception of 'work', 'business', or 'society', it is unlikely it will emerge.

According to Hall (1988: 167), 'Thatcherism' as an ideology works by addressing 'the fears, anxieties, the lost identities of a people. It invites us to think about politics in images. It is addressed to our collective fantasies, to Britian as an imagined community, to the social imaginary'. Excellence appears to operate in a similar vein, offering people the fantasy of 'Entrepreneurship'. It promotes an image of 'self-determination' at work, inviting people to feel as if they are their own bosses - to experience 'ownership' - and to become 'entrepreneurs

of themselves'.

In the U.S. context, as Guest (1990: 390) has indicated, Excellence has enjoyed enormous success because, like 'Reaganism', it managed to capture 'the essence of the American Dream'. He argues that it is precisely because Excellence plays on fantasies of 'the opportunity for progress, or growth, based on individual achievement' that it has gained 'a stubborn hold on the American mind' (Guest, 1990: 391) [6]. By drawing attention to the importance of 'dreams', 'images' and 'fantasy' in the operation of Excellence, Guest has performed a great service. However, it is one he quickly undermines by giving way to the desire to reintroduce a reality/representation dichotomy. While he argues that Excellence addresses and connects with ordinary people's aspirations and displays 'the good intention' of turning them into 'reality', he concludes that 'the evidence suggests this is no more than a fantasy, a dream' (Guest, 1990: 391). What is this evidence? Once more it is 'objective material circumstances'.

Rather than exploring the level of 'ideological fantasy' at which Excellence 'structures social reality', Guest tries to establish a clear and transparent relationship between the socially active signifier and the real relations to which it might refer. Not surprisingly, it proves impossible to break out of the ideological dream by "opening our eyes and trying to see reality as it is", by throwing away the ideological spectacles: as the subjects of such a post-ideological, objective, sober look, free of so-called ideological prejudices, as the subjects of a look which views the facts as they are, we remain throughout 'the consciousness of our ideological dream' (Zizek, 1989: 48).

What, then, does it mean to suggest that 'ideological fantasy structures reality' itself ? Well, firstly, it suggests that a certain 'misrecognition' characterizes the human condition. In Lacanian terms, this 'misrecognition' occurs because all attempts to capture the 'Real' symbolically ultimately fail. There is always a 'leftover', a 'surplus' separating the 'Real' from its symbolization. However, for this very reason 'misrecognition' is not synonymous with the traditional concept of 'false consciousness'. Rather than viewing ideology as a 'false' or 'illusory' representation of reality, it is reality itself which should already be conceived of as 'ideological'. As Zizek (1989: 21) argues '*"ideological" is a social reality whose very existence implies the non-knowledge of its participants as to its essence*'. Ideology is a

fantasy-construct that serves as a support for 'reality' iteslf. The function of ideology 'is not to offer us a point of escape from our reality but to offer us the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic real kernel' (Zizek, 1989: 45).

This 'traumatic real kernel' is the 'surplus', the left-over separating the Real from its symbolization. To attempt to comes to terms with this 'excess' requires an acknowledgement of a certain fundamental deadlock (what Laclau & Mouffe have termed 'antagonism'), 'a hard kernel resisting symbolic integration-dissolution' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; 1987; Zizek, 1989). In this way it is possible to see what Laclau and Mouffe (1985) are suggesting when they say that 'Society doesn't exist'. They are certainly not lending support to the Thatcherite dictum that 'there is no such thing as Society, just individuals and their families'. Rather they are attempting to indicate that 'the social' is 'always an inconsistent field structured around a constitutive impossibility', a fundamental antagonism. 'Society never fully manages to be society because everything in it is penetrated by its limits, which prevents it constituting itself as an objective reality' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 127). However, because society is always traversed by an antagonistic split which cannot be integrated into the symbolic order 'the stake of ideological fantasy is to construct a vision of society which does exist, a society which is not split by an antagonistic division, a society in which the relation between its parts is organic, complementary' (Zizek, 1989: 126).

The discourse/ideology of 'Excellence' operates with such a 'unitary frame of reference' (Fox, 1974). The vision it projects is of a cohesive but inherently 'flexible' organization where an 'organic' complementarity is established between 'the greatest possible realization of the intrinsic abilities of individuals at work' and the 'optimum productivity and profitability of the corporation' (Kanter, 1990; Pascale, 1991). In this vision, the 'No Win scenario' associated with a 'mechanistic', 'bureaucratic' lack of Enterprise is transformed into a permanent 'Win/Win situation' through the active development of a 'flexible', 'creative', and 'organic' entrepreneurialism (Pinchot, 1985: 38). For Excellence, as for Thatcherism, economic and moral revival involves the construction of an appropriate culture of Enterprise: Enterprise is their 'ideological fantasy'. Both of these evangelical projects are engaged in struggle against lack of Enterprise, which they conceptualise as a fundamental cause of social antagonism, a disease spreading through the social body destroying 'initiative', 'innovation', 'creativity' and

the like. This debilitating 'lack' can only be overcome, and social harmony restored, it is suggested, through the promotion and development of Enterprise in both its distinct senses. In other words, the symbolic enemy - 'bureaucracy' and its associated evils - may only be defeated by summoning up and unleashing the forces of Enterprise and, in particular, the remarkable powers of its 'everyday hero' - the private, possessive, competitive, enterprising individual (man).

In their respective visions, lack of Enterprise appears to be a foreign body introducing corruption into the pure, sound social fabric. However, in effect, 'lack of Enterprise' is akin to a 'symptom', the point at which the immanent social antagonism erupts on to the surface of the social, the point at which, to recall Laclau and Mouffe, it becomes apparent that the organization/society 'doesn't work'. Thus, 'lack of Enterprise' is basically the means, for both Excellence, and Thatcherism, of taking into account, of representing their own impossibility. It is the expression of the ultimate impossibility of their respective projects - of their 'immanent limits'. Rather than being a positive cause of social antagonism, 'lack of Enterprise' is just the expression of a 'certain blockage' - of the impossibility which prevents the organization/society from achieving its full identity as a closed, homogeneous totality.

some concluding remarks

As Wright (1987) has indicated, the rise of both Excellence and Thatcherism has prompted frequent derision and disdain from various figures who view themselves as representatives of a deep and authentic humanism (the 'artist', the 'scholar' etc). While there may be a certain (simple) consolation in equating the contemporary discourse of Enterprise with the merely 'philistine', Wright suggests, such a response misplaces its critical energies - indicating a powerful cultural elitism, while missing the point completely. The projects of both Excellence and Thatcherism deserve altogether more serious attention. As Gordon (1987: 300) has argued, rather than being a travesty of genuine value, the triumph of the entrepreneur is directly related to 'a profound mutation' in governmental rationality: 'Here a certain idea of the enterprise of government promotes and capitalizes on a widely disseminated conception of

individuality as an enterprise, of the person as an entrepreneur of the self'.

The key features of contemporary political rationalities and technologies of government has been the connections they have tried to establish between the self-fulfilling desires of individuals and the achievement of social and economic objectives. As Rose (1989: 24) has indicated, the success of neo-liberalism in Britain (as elsewhere in the West), with its flagship image of an 'Enterprise Culture', 'operates within a much more general transformation in "mentalities of government" in which the autonomous, responsible, free, choosing self...has become central to the moral bases of political arguments from all parts of the political spectrum'. It is the vocabulary of Enterprise which establishes an affinity between 'Excellence' and the neo-liberal government in the U.K. The expertise of Excellence provides the means whereby the politico-ethical objectives of neo-liberalism in the U.K., the economic objectives of contemporary business, and the self-actualising and self-regulating capacities of human subjects are linked together into a 'functioning network'. By so doing Excellence establishes 'connections and symmetries' between 'the way we are governed by others and the way we should govern ourselves' (Rose, 1989: 3).

However, as even Miller and Rose (1990: 10) admit, 'government is a congenitally failing operation'. The 'Real' always escapes attempts to govern it because there is always a 'surplus' seperating the Real from its symbolization. Whether expressed in terms of 'ideology' or 'cultural technology', therefore, the most that government can hope for is to manage this 'lack of fit' without ever resolving it. Nonetheless, at one and the same time, this very 'impossibility' of government justifies and reproduces the attempt to govern.

In the first part of this chapter, I argued that the identity of the 'worker' has been differentially constituted in the changing practices of governing economic life rather than being some transcendental *a priori* category representing the essence of every direct producer. 'Workers' and 'managers' have been made up in different ways - discursively re-imagined and re-conceptualised - at different times through their positioning in a variety of discourses of work reform. Changes in the ways of conceptualizing, documenting, and acting upon the internal world of the business organization, it was argued, actively transform the meaning and reality of work.

In the second part of the chapter, I indicated the ways in which people are 'made up' at work in the present by exploring the contemporary management discourse of 'Excellence' and its relationship to the contemporary political rationality of 'Enterprise'. In particular, I attempted to show how the expertise of Excellence provides the means through which the politico-ethical objectives of neo-liberal government in the U.K., the economic objectives of contemporary business, and the self-actualising capacities of human subjects are linked together into a functioning network.

However, this accounts for only one part of the story of 'making up people' at work. As I indicated earlier, the relationship between government and governed is inherently 'agonistic' because this relation passes through the manner in which governed individuals are willing to exist as particular subjects. In order to chart the process by which people are made up at work it is important, therefore, not only to outline the ways in which the category of the 'worker' or 'manager' is differentially constituted in the changing practices of governing life, but to explore the actual behaviour of those so categorised as well.

In the following chapter, I will attempt to conclude my tentative framework for charting the discursive construction of work-based subjectivity and identity by exploring what people make or do with the representations and technologies to which they are subjected; in other words, I will change theoretical direction to focus upon popular 'tactics of consumption', or 'usage'.

Notes

1. Ian Hacking (1983) delineates the triptych Real - Representation - Reality. Reality is 'a lower order concept' formed through the practice of representation.

The 'Real' - in the Lacanian sense - is an impossible entity to fully represent, but its effects cannot be avoided. The 'Real' is a 'hard kernel' (Zizek, 1989) resisting symbolic integration/dissolution and yet only through trying to represent it can its effects be grasped. In other words, the 'Real' is an entity which must be constructed retroactively so that the distortions of the symbolic structure can be accounted for. As Lacan (1987:7) puts it, 'I always speak the truth, not the whole truth because there's no way to say it all. Saying the whole truth is materially impossible: words miss it. Yet it is only through this impossibility that the truth holds onto the real'.

2. There can be little doubt that the Excellence literature has touched a nerve. The acknowledged leader of the field, Peters & Waterman's *In Search of Excellence*, remains the best-selling business book of all time, with world-wide sales of over five million by 1985.

3. According to the cultural critic Judith Williamson (1991: 28), the language of Enterprise has surpassed the boundaries imposed by even this looser definition. 'What intrigued me', she writes, 'is not only that enterprise now means business, but the fact that...it can be seen as...a personal attribute in its own right. The language has colonized our interiors; if you can't speak it, you haven't got it!'.

4. As William Connolly (1987: 138) has indicated 'equality' and 'excellence' tend to be mutually exclusive categories:

> To honor equality (an admirable thing) is also to demean excellence in certain ways; to institutionalize individualism is to sacrifice the solace and benefits of community; to exercise freedom is to experience the closure which accompanies choice among

incompatible and often irreconcilable projects; to secure stable identities through gender demarcation is to exclude the hermaphrodite from such an identity and to suppress that in others which does not fit neatly into its frame; to prize the rule of law is to invite the extension of litigiousness into new corners of social life; to institutionalize respect for the responsible agent is to sow institutional disrespect for those unqualified or unwilling to exercise such responsibility; to give primacy to mathematicization in the social construction of knowledge is to denigrate individuals whose thought escapes that mold and to depreciate ways of knowing which do not fit into its frame. And lest the point be misread, to reverse these priorities would be to install another set of losses and impositions.

5. As Wright (1987: 8-9) has observed, 'Excellence works in the everyday world, diversifying consumer lifestyles as it goes'. It is a defining feature of members of the new expanding 'service'/middle class, to which the 'cultural intemediaries of Excellence belong, to seek their 'occupational and personal salvation in the imposition of new doctrines of ethical salvation' (Bourdieu, 1984: 365). In other words, by encouraging as many people as possible to share its 'investment orientation to life' at work, as well as in all other spheres of existence, this social grouping is engaged in a symbolic action which not only produces the need for its own goods and services, but also, in the long run, legitimates itself and the lifestyle(s) it puts forward as a model.

6. Silver (1987: 124-125), another commentator on the links between 'Excellence' and 'neo-conservatism' in the USA, argues that the appeal of Excellence is located in its cry to American employees to 'stand tall' again, rather then feeling inferior to their international competitiors (particularly the Japanese) , and that this rallying call 'fell on the same receptive ground as Reagan's exhortations to the American people to "feel proud to be American", and one might argue, the same receptive ground as such popular cultural phenomena as Rambo and Rocky, which are also celebrations of extraordinary effort from ordinary people'.

chapter four

the cult[ure] of the customer: production, consumption, everyday life

Introduction

Thus far in the thesis discussion of the discursive construction of work-based subjectivity and identity has tended to take place at a some what 'structural' level. In the previous chapter, for example, I indicated the ways in which the managerial discourse of Excellence, operating as it were, 'from above', makes up new ways for people to be at work. However, I said little or nothing about what those subjected to this discourse make or do with it. This is a significant omission for, as Giddens (1979) has argued, the notion of 'structure' cannot be understood without the notion of human agency. As I indicated in chapter two, if subjects were simply the product of structures then a total determinism would govern social relations. Similarly, for Foucault (1982: 221) 'freedom' is an essential element in the relation between government and governed. There can be no relationship of government where the 'determining factors saturate the whole'.

In effect, what both Foucault and Giddens testify to is the centrality of the category of 'dislocation'. As I argued in chapter one, any identity is dislocated insofaras it 'depends on an outside which both denies that identity and provides the conditions of its possibility at the same time' (Laclau, 1990: 39). Thus if the 'structure' ('discourse', 'government') that 'makes up' the subject ('human agent', 'governed') is inherently dislocated, if it can only constitute itself in relation to an 'outside', as Laclau suggests, then the structure will not be able to fully determine the subject.

According to Hacking (1986: 234) 'making up people' should be understood in terms of such dislocation. Although there is no general story to be told about 'making up people' - because every category, as Mauss argued, has its own history - Hacking suggests that a partial framework for thinking of such events would consist of two mutually constitutive vectors. One is the vector of 'labelling from above', 'from a community of experts who create a "reality" that some people make their own'. Different from this, but equally important, is the vector of 'the actual behaviour of those so labelled, which presses from below, creating a reality that every expert must face'. Although, at first sight this framework may appear to be replicating traditional dualisms associated with the project of sociology - those of object

subject, society/individual, for example, - this is not in fact the case. As I argued above, these vectors should not be seen as two fully constituted objectivities. Rather they are *mutually constitutive*. The subject of the second vector has no 'proper' place of its own. It operates within a space delineated by, but not equivalent to, the first vector. Therefore, it does not manifest itself through its own autonomous representations but in relation to its ways of 'using', or 'consuming', representations and technologies emanating from 'from above' (de Certeau, 1984).

In this chapter I will turn my attention to this second vector. Utilising insights from theorists of contemporary consumer culture I consider what 'those so labelled' make and do with the representations and technologies to which they are subjected and which they cannot keep at a distance. By focusing upon the 'tactics' of those so-labelled it becomes possible, I argue, to delineate the ways in which people remain 'other' within the very colonization that assimilates them. As de Certeau (1984: xiii) suggests, the logic of these 'tactics of consumption' serves to expose the limits of subjectification: 'labelling from above' never quite manages to get the measure of subjectivity, it is both excessive and inadequate. Hence the fundamental impossibility of 'government'. In other words, because the vector of 'labelling from above' never manages to fully constitute itself as an objectivity, its identity is dislocated. The very identity of 'labelling from above' depends upon a 'constitutive outside' - the second vector - which both denies that identity and provides the conditions of its possibility at one and the same time.

First, however, I return to the discourse of Enterprise/Excellence, in order to examine the status it accords to the 'customer' in the marketplace and to explore how this image of the 'sovereign consumer' is related to the new image of the productive subject.

the cult[ure] of the customer

As I indicated in the previous chapter, governing economic life in an enterprising manner is intimately bound up with the de-differentiation of economy and culture - with a pronounced blurring between the spheres of 'production' and 'consumption', the 'corporate' and 'culture'. As the language of the market becomes the only valid vocabulary of moral and social

calculation, the 'privilege of the producer' is superceded by the 'sovereignty of the consumer', with 'civic culture' gradually giving way to 'consumer culture' as citizens are reconceptualised as 'enterprising consumers'(Bauman, 1987; Abercrombie, 1990; Keat, 1990).

According to Bauman (1988: 220), for example, once the market has made people dependent upon itself for their own reproduction, they become, first and foremost, consumers.

> Consumer culture is a culture of men and women integrated into society as, above all, consumers. Features of the consumer culture explicable solely in terms of the logic of the market, where they originate, spill over all other aspects of contemporary life - if there are any other aspects, unaffected by the market mechanism left. Thus every item of culture becomes a commodity and becomes subordinated to the logic of the market either through a direct, economic mechanism, or an indirect psychological one. All perceptions and expectations, as well as life-rhythm, qualities of memory, attention, motivational and topical relevances are moulded inside the new 'foundational' insititution - that of the market (Bauman, 1987: 166).

Similarly, as Rose (1990: 102) has indicated, the 'primary economic image offered to the modern citizen is not that of the producer but of the consumer'. As 'consumers' people are encouraged to shape their lives by the use of their purchasing power and to make sense of their existence by exercising their freedom to choose in a market in which 'one simultaneously purchases products and services, and assembles, manages and markets oneself'. Within the discourse of Enterprise/Excellence consumers are constituted as autonomous, self-regulating, and self-actualising individual actors seeking to maximise their 'quality of life' - in other words, to optimise the worth of their existence to themselves - by assembling a lifestyle, or lifestyles, through personalised acts of choice in the marketplace. Thus, in an 'Enterprise Culture', freedom and independence emanate not from civil rights but from individual choices exercised in the market: 'the sovereignty that matters is not that of the king or the queen, the lord or the white man, but the sovereignty of the consumer in the marketplace' (Corner &

Harvey, 1991: 11).

Within the discourse of Enterprise/Excellence an active, 'enterprising' consumer is placed at the moral centre of the market-based universe. What counts as 'good', or 'virtuous', in this universe is judged by reference to the apparent needs, desires, and projected preferences of the 'sovereign consumer'. Thus, an 'Enterprise Culture' is a culture of 'the Customer', where markets subordinate producers to the preferences of individual consumers. Success and failure in this market based universe are supposedly determined by the relative ability of competing producers to satisfy the preferences of the 'enterprising' consumer (Keat, 1990; 223).

In this way, the 'character' of the 'Customer' has become a central element in attempts to reconstruct a variety of institutions and practices in both the public and private sectors [1]. In the public sector, for example, the language of Enterprise/ Excellence has provided the rationale for programmes of intervention and rectification in, amongst other things, the delivery of healthcare and the provision of local government services. As a number of commentators have argued (Edgar, 1991; Hall, 1991) from the hospital to the railway station, and from the classroom to the museum, the public sector has found itself translated. 'Patients', 'parents', 'pupils' and 'passengers' have all been reimagined as 'customers'.

However, while the character of the customer has played a vital role in the reconstruction of a wide range of public institutions and activities along market lines, it is also linked to a transformation in programmes and technologies for regulating the internal world of the 'private' business enterprise. In other words, although the free market system provides the inherently virtuous model through which all forms of social relation should be structured, in order to guarantee that the optimum benefits accrue from the workings of this intrinsically virtuous system it is the moral obligation of each and every commercial organization, and every member of such an organization, to become obsessed with 'staying close to the customer' (Peters & Waterman, 1982). To conform to 'the requirements of the customer' is to envisage a new type of rule and to imagine new ways for people to conduct themselves *within* the private business enterprise, as well as outside. In effect, the 'character' of the sovereign consumer provides a novel image for the productive subject. 'The best companies have now realised that effective customer care is a crucial part of commercial success. The key is for managers to treat staff as they would hope staff would treat customers' (Clutterbuck & Crainer,

1988: 264). In truly 'Excellent', 'enterprising' companies, Peters & Waterman (1982: 321-323) argue, the 'external' focus on the customer is matched by an 'internal' focus on 'empowering' workers.

> cost and efficiency, over the long run, follow on from the emphasis on quality, service, innovativeness, result-sharing, participation, excitement and an external problem-solving focus that is tailored to the customer...Quite simply these companies are simultaneously externally focused - externally in that they are driven by the desire to provide service, quality and innovative problem-solving in support of their customers, internally in that quality control, for example, is put on the back of the individual line-worker, not primarily in the lap of the quality control department. Service standards are likewise largely self-monitored...This constitutes the crucial internal focus: the focus on people...By offering meaning as well as money they give their employees a mission as well as a sense of feeling great. Every man becomes a pioneer, an experimentor, a leader. The institution provides the guiding belief and creates a sense of excitement, a sense of being part of the best.

In reconstructing the commercial organization around the 'character' of the sovereign consumer the work-based subject is also reconceptualised: the worker is reimagined as an individual actor in search of meaning, responsibility, a sense of personal achievement and a maximised quality of life. Work is now construed as an activity through which people produce and discover a sense of personal identity. In effect, workers are encouraged to view work as *consumers*: work becomes an arena in which people exhibit an 'enterprising' or 'consuming' relationship to self, where they 'make a project of themselves, and where they develop a style of living that will maximise the worth of their existence to themselves. In other words,'work' as an activity is reimagined through the language of consumer culture.

One of the ways in which commercial organizations have sought to become more customer-oriented is through the technologies and practices of Total Quality Management

(TQM). As Hill (1991: 399-40; 1992), for example, has indicated the foremost principle of TQM is that 'quality is defined as conformance to the requirements of the customer'. However, the term 'customer' does not simply refer to relations between an 'inside' (the company) and an outside (individual consumers), rather relationships between employees and departments within the firm are also construed in terms of the customer model: employees become each others customers.

> *There are internal as well as external customers*...An organizational unit receives inputs from the previous proccess and transforms these to produce outputs for the next...As a 'customer', a unit should expect conformance to its own requirements, while as a supplier it has an obligation to conform to the requirements of others (Hill, 1991: 400).

Although this focus on 'consumer sovereignty' is a pronounced feature of discourses of work reform within both the public and private sectors, and of restructuring programmes within 'manufacturing' as well as 'service' industries, it is particularly pronounced in those organizations where the quality of interactive service delivery 'has become an important source of value' (Fuller & Smith, 1991: 2; Hochschild, 1983; Noyelle, 1987). As 'quality of service' becomes seen as 'a prime determinant of service firms' competitive success or failure' (Fuller & Smith, 1991: 2) the links between workers and consumers have grown ever more tighter. Increasingly, the character of the customer has invaded the internal world of the service organization, providing the rationale for the cultural reconstruction of work-based subjectivity and identity in services.

As Hochschild(1983: 105-106), for example, has indicated providing 'quality service' requires that workers identify with customers as individuals with the same 'wants' 'needs' and 'desires' as themselves. Through the use of human technologies of interpersonal and emotion management, workers are encouraged to put themselves in their customer's shoes, and thus to offer them the sort of service they themselves would ideally like to receive. As part of this process of imaginative identification workers are often taught to view the arena in which they work as their own 'home' into which customers come as 'guests'. Thus 'quality service'

requires workers to instrumentally assemble, manage, and market aspects of their experience and identity as consumers. In the process, employees will become not only better workers, but also better selves.

Through the image of the 'sovereign consumer', the relations between 'production' and 'consumption', between the 'inside' and 'outside' of the corporation, and most importantly perhaps between work-based and consumption-based identities, are progressively blurred (du Gay & Salaman, 1992; Sabel, 1990). The 'culture of the customer' brooks no opposition between the mode of self-presentation required of people as consumers, and that required by managers and employees. The relationship to self that the employee is expected to develop builds upon and extends the identity he or she is deemed to have as a consumer: both are represented as autonomous, calculating individuals in search of meaning and fulfilment, looking to 'add value' to themselves in every sphere of existence, whether at work or at play.

As a number of commentators have suggested (Bauman, 1987: 167-168; Bourdieu, 1984; Deleuze, 1992), the development of contemporary consumer culture involves a substantive change in the mode of domination central to social integration. The new mode of domination distinguishes itself by the substitution of 'seduction' for 'repression' [2], public relations for policing, advertising for authority, and needs-creation for norm-imposition. What is deemed to tie individuals to the social formation is their activity as *consumers*.

> Individuals do not need, therefore, to be repressed in their natural drives and tendency to subordinate their behaviour to the pleasure principle: they do not need to be invigilated and policed (Bauman, 1987: 168).

Because the function of surveillance in consumer culture is now placed in the hands of the 'market', social 'surveillance' gives way to 'auto-surveillance' (Deleuze, 1992). As I indicated in the previous chapter, the new image of the productive subject contained within the discourse of Excellence is first and foremost a self-regulating individual actor. Rather than relying on the disciplinary gaze of the 'Supervisor' (what Peters (1987: 363) terms an 'out of date cop'), attempts to govern economic life now aspire to instill and utilise the self-directing, self-

actualising propensities and desires of subjects. In other words, if the subject of contemporary consumer culture is defined as a self-regulating, individual actor seeking to maximise the worth of its existence to itself through personalised acts of choice in a market-based universe, then the productive subject must be seen now, first and foremost, as a consumer.

As I suggested above, the prevailing image of the worker in contemporary discourses of economic life is of an individual in search of meaning, responsibility and a sense of personal fulfilment . This individual is not to be policed and invigilated by others because work is defined, not as a constraint upon freedom, but as a realm in which people represent, construct and confirm their identity as consumers. Work is a site and an activity which forms an integral aspect of an individual's 'style of life' as a consumer (Rose, 1990).

If the primary image informing representations of economic life is that of the 'sovereign consumer', and if the organization and experience of work is increasingly structured around 'staying close to the customer', then it is apparent that understanding the production and regulation of work-based subjectivity and identity necessitates an exploration of the dynamics of contemporary consumer culture and the 'ways of operating' of consumers (de Certeau, 1984; Featherstone, 1990; Willis, 1990). It is to this latter task that I now turn.

traditional representations of consumption

For what seems like an inordinate length of time, sociologists in general, and industrial sociologists in particular, have observed that paid work is not 'the central life interest' of the majority of men and women in employment in modern western societies (Mills, 1951; Dubin, 1962; Goldthorpe et al., 1969; Fox, 1980). However, while this observation has achieved a somewhat normative status within the social sciences, it has not led to any significant changes in the central research interests of industrial sociologists. On the whole the sociology of work and employment has remained firmly wedded to a 'productionist' orientation whereby the 'public' realm of paid work is represented as *the* vital existential sphere in contrast to the 'private' sphere of consumption and leisure. Once again, the influence of 'alienation' can be detected in the marginalization of consumption from the research agenda.

As a number of commentators have argued (Goldthorpe et al., 1969; Moorhouse, 1989;

Pateman, 1989), the continued attachment of many sociologists to an old philosophical anthropology of production leads to a devaluation in all forms of 'self-creation' that take place outside of the workplace. In other words, while many sociologists point to the growing importance of consumption to people's sense of who and what they are, because they have incorporated a marxian emphasis on 'labour' as the only 'real' site of human self-constitution, they tend to view consumption simply as an arena where 'alienated' workers attain derisory compensations for their lack of self-actualisation in work; an overriding concern with consumption is thereby seen to reflect the subject's fundamental 'alienation' in work [3].

In this type of critique - articulated most famously perhaps in the work of Critical Theorists such as Marcuse (1964) - it is because the worker is 'not at home' in 'his' (*sic*) work, because 'work is a calamity', that 'he' (*sic*) can only find satisfaction in the sphere of non-work, in the 'false', 'passive needs of personal consumption and domestic life' (Gorz, 1965: 16-17). Furthermore, 'consumers' are regarded as fully determined by Capital. Consumer desires and needs are 'created' by producers through the medium of advertising and market research and then 'satisified' by the goods and services provided by those same producers. There is no sign of 'dislocation' here, 'consumers' simply follow to the letter of the law a script pre-written by Capital. Their very 'needs' and 'wants' are created by the market and through the manipulation of 'public opinion' by the mass media controlled by Capital. In the emergent homogeneous 'mass culture', therefore, all material culture is reduced to the status of 'commodity', while the people that live in and through that object-world are constituted as alienated 'passive' consumers.

Because 'consumption' is completely determined by production in this account, there is no room for 'human agency'. 'Structure' predominates to such an extent that the universe appears to be nothing more than a self-regulating totality (Laclau, 1990: 51-52). However, it is with just such a conception of a self-regulating totality that the logic of dislocation breaks. If the category of 'production' only has meaning in relation to the category of 'consumption', if it can only constitute itself in relation to an 'outside', then 'production' cannot fully determine 'consumption' in the manner suggested in the 'mass culture critique'. Rather 'consumption' both denies the identity of 'production' and provides its condition of possibility at one and the

same time. After all if 'production' saturated 'consumption' there would be no need for the term 'manipulation' in the language of the 'mass culture critique' (Miller, 1987: 166) As Foucault (1982) argued 'power' can only be exercised where there is freedom; to be successful in making others act in accordance with ones own wishes one requires knowledge of their motives. The fact that producers do not completely dominate consumers but must ceaselessly attempt to exercise power over them is attested to by the development of motivation research as part of modern marketing and advertising techniques (Mort, 1989). Activity under this heading is largely directed towards delineating the dreams, desires and aspirations of consumers. In other words, the cultural intermediaries of advertising, design and market research don't attempt to manipulate 'consumers' *per se*, but rather the *symbolic meanings* which are attached to products.

In his early work, for example, Baudrillard (1988: 45) exposed the essentialist conception of human nature underlying the 'mass culture critique' by indicating the ways in which the products of human labour are not aimed at the fulfilment of some 'fundamental', transparent, 'needs' which lie at the basis of the materiality of humanity, but constitute a system of signs that differentiate the population: 'if we acknowledge that a need is not a need for a particular object as much as it is a "need" for difference (the desire for social meaning), only then will we understand that satisfaction can never be *fulfilled*, and consequently that there can never be a *definition* of needs'.

Similarly, Campbell (1987: 48) argues that the 'mass culture critique' rests upon an assumption that consumption is and must always be a rational process. Therefore, insofaras 'emotion', 'imagination' and 'desire' enter into the processes through which objects are consumed by individuals then ideological 'mystification' and 'exploitation' must be at work. By projecting a uni-dimensional evaluation of consumption in terms of the rational calculation of 'needs', the 'mass culture critique' is unable to delineate the dynamic 'cultural' logic at the heart of modern consumerism. For if 'consumerism' is founded on 'desire', as Baudrillard suggests, and 'desire' can never be realized because it fulfils no possibility and has no content, then it is impossibility which 'drives' modern consumption; consumption is dynamic because disillusionment is the necessary concomitant of the acquisition of goods longed for in fantasy.

The traditional critique cannot grasp this fundamental tension. Rather than being

unproblematically focused and directed at the object and the intrinsic satisfaction it might bring 'consumer behaviour' in fact 'responds to quite different objectives: the metaphoric or displaced expression of desire, and the production of a code of social values through the use of differentiating signs' (Baudrillard, 1988: 46) [4].

Modes of Consumption

consumption as social differentiation

As Baudrillard's comments indicate, commodities and services have importance as signs and symbols. In other words, they have 'identity-value' and not simply or primarily 'use-value'. The consumption of goods and services is therefore important not so much for the intrinsic satisfaction it might generate but for the way in which it functions to mark social differences and act as a communicator. Style, status, and group identification are aspects of identity-value, where people choose to display commodities or engage in different spheres of consumption with a view to expressing their identity as certain sorts of persons (Warde, 1992).

The suggestion that consumption activities are linked to patterns of social differentiation is not new. In his classic study of the 'conspicuous consumption' of the 'Leisure Class' (1899, here 1957) Veblen indicated that the consumption of goods acted as a primary index of social status.

Although Veblen was particularly interested in outlining the ways in which the *nouveaux riches* Leisure Class expressed their status through distancing themselves from the world of practical necessity and of paid employment, he also suggested that no social group was entirely exempt from the practice of 'conspicuous consumption'.

> No class of society, not even the most abjectedly poor, forgoes all customary conspicuous consumption. The last items of this category of consumption are not given up except under the stress of the direct necessity (Veblen, 1957: 85).

In other words, no matter how ostensibly poor they may be, the consumption practices of even the lowliest social groupings tend to have 'identity value' as well as simply 'use value'. This point is picked up on and elaborated by Bourdieu (1984) in his wideranging examination of the economy of cultural goods and lifestyles in French society.

Although Bourdieu (1989:14) has argued that his analyses of consumption practices 'have nothing in common with those of Veblen', it is apparent that both authors share certain assumptions. In particular, both Veblen and Bourdieu lay great emphasis on the area of 'taste' as the key dimension controlling the significance of ordinary goods.

One of Bourdieu's main aims is to rid 'taste' of its essentialist overtones. He does this by indicating the way in which Kant's notion of the 'aesthetic' as distanced contemplation is merely one perspective, that of the dominant class. The Kantian aesthetic tends towards a rejection of representation of the signified in favour of the principles of convention, the esoteric and the formal. The overt display of wealth and consumption characteristic of Veblen's 'Leisure Class' is challenged by a more subtle, detached and inconspicuous form, to be appreciated only by those sufficiently cultivated or 'civilized'.

The Kantian aesthetic (or 'high' culture) achieves its meaning by contrast to what Bourdieu terms an anti-Kantian aesthetic (or 'popular' culture) with its preference for immediate entertainment, pleasure, and gut-emotion. For the former, beauty is created through the mode of representation, for the latter it is inherent within the subject itself (Bourdieu, 1984: 30). These differences in taste are identified by Bourdieu as an example of 'habitus'. By 'habitus' Bourdieu is referring to the unconscious dispositions, the classificatory schemes, and taken-for-granted preferences which are evident in the individual's sense of the approriateness and validity of his or her taste for cultural goods and practices, and which not only operate at the level of everday knowledgeability, but are also inscribed onto the body. As 'habitus', the distinction between the Kantian and anti-Kantian aesthetic is both derived from 'material conditions', and, in turn, provides an insight into the classificatory scheme which may be applied to an infinite number of actual consumption domains (Bourdieu, 1984; Miller, 1987; Featherstone, 1982; 1987).

When mapping differences in taste, the criterion deployed by Bourdieu tends to be either occupation or educational level, but both are related to a common conception of class as

'Upper', Middle', and 'Working'. Bourdieu argues that each group, class, or class fraction has a different habitus, and, hence, a different taste structure. In other words, different 'objective conditions' are interiorized through habitus as desire expressed in taste.

> Taste is the practical operator in the transmutation of things into distinct and distinctive signs, of continuous distributions into discontinuous oppositions; it raises the differences inscribed in the physical order of bodies to the symbolic order of significant distinctions. It transforms objectively classified practices, in which a class condition signifies itself (through taste), into classifying practices, that is, into a symbolic expression of class position, by perceiving them in their mutual relations and terms of social classificatory schemes. Taste is thus the source of the system of distinctive features which cannot fail to be perceived as a systematic expression of a particular class of conditions of existence, i.e., as a distinctive lifestyle, by anyone who possesses practical knowledge of the relationships between distinctive signs and positions in the distributions - between the universe of objective properties, which is brought to light by scientific construction, and the no less objective universe of life-styles which exists for and through ordinary experience (Bourdieu, 1984: 174-175).

'Habitus' thereby mediates between material conditions including but not simply reduced to, productive relations, and the observable practices of the social group.

Haiving indicated the ways in which taste in cultural goods functions as a marker for social class, Bourdieu goes on to map out the social field of the different tastes in lifestyles and consumption preferences. In the case of food consumption, for example, Bourdieu (1984) indicates that the working classes are found to prefer the immediacy and security of abundance, a plentiful table proclaiming itself to those around it, strong red meat, 'unpretentious' red wine, and solid breads and cheeses. Middle class food becomes 'cuisine'. Taste here is based on knowledge of the proper methods of preparation and presentation, as well as on the 'correct' foodstuffs to eat for a well-balanced diet. For the 'economically' dominant fraction of the

upper classes, rich sauces and desserts are preferred, supplemented by rare and luxurious items such as vintage champagne and truffles. Meanwhile the preferred food for the display of cultural capital (the dominated fraction of the upper classes) is nouvelle cuisine, a *repas* in which the aesthetics of minimalism are considered infinitely more important than any regard for sustenance.

In contrast to the traditional view of a grey, conformist mass culture in which consumers' use of goods simply reflects the purposes inscribed into them by producers, Bourdieu indicates the ways in which particular constellations of taste, consumption preferences and lifestyle practices are associated with certain social groupings. In so doing he accounts for the way in which goods not only reflect distinction, but are also an instrument of it.

For Bourdieu (1989), the 'structural despair' of the mass culture critique is founded upon a 'strong objectivism' which effectively eliminates the knowledgeable consumer from social analysis. In opposition to this 'strong objectivism' Bourdieu (1989:15) attempts to indicate the ways in which 'objective' and 'subjective' moments stand in 'dialectical relation':

> ...I could sum up in one phrase the gist of the analysis I am putting forward today: on the one hand, the objective structures that the sociologist constructs, in the objectivist moment, by setting aside the subjective representations and constitute the structural constraints that bear upon the interactions; but, on the other hand, these representations must be taken into consideration particularly if one wants to account for the daily struggles, individual and collective, which purport to transform or to preserve these structures. This means that the two moments, the objectivist and the subjectivist, stand in dialectical relationship.

Although Bourdieu's work on consumption expressly attempts to navigate this dialectic, in many ways it simply ends up perpetuating a form of the mass culture critique. In particular the attempt to map consumption practices through the use of a highly structured questionnaire leads to an extremely 'static' picture of consumer behaviour. Although inventive and productive Bourdieu's questionnnaire can only provide quiescent responses, rather than insights into everyday practices, and , through processing creates a normative characterization of the diverse

social fractions involved, which are represented as exemplars of a larger, statistically-based model of class. The dynamic interaction of 'agency' and 'structure' that Bourdieu sets out to capture is nowhere to be seen, and, as a result the consumer as an active, knowledgable social subject seems unduly constrained once again.

According to de Certeau (1984), for example, Bourdieu loses sight of the practices he seeks to delineate in the drive for a consistent congruence through habitus engendered by class interests and constrained possibilities. Against his best intentions, de Certeau (1984: 166) suggests, Bourdieu still assumes that consumption 'necessarily means "becoming similar to" what one absorbs, and not "making something similar" to what one is, making it ones own, appropriating, or reappropriating it'. By reducing the analysis of specific material domains to their place in social differentiation and domination, Bourdieu is unable to express what people actually make or do with the objects they consume, or to articulate what practices of consumption mean to those engaged in them.

Because Bourdieu's analysis is largely based upon the mapping of differences between goods on to differences between social goups, and because the latter are treated as prior social divisions unaltered by this process of signification, people become unilaterally trapped in positions from which they are unable to extricate themselves. In his discussion of working-class consumer behaviour, for example, people are reduced to a relationship of immediacy from which they cannot escape (Bourdieu,1984: 386). As a result, Bourdieu ends up reiterating the oppressive hypothesis of the 'mass culture critique'

> It is not only in music or sport that ordinary people are reduced to the role of the 'fan', the militant 'supporter' locked in a passionate, even chauvinistic, but passive and spurious participation which is merely an illusory compensation for dispossession by experts. What the relation to 'mass' (and, *a fortiori*, 'elite') cultural products reproduces, reactivates and reinforces is not the monotony of the production line or office but the social relation which underlies working class experience of the world, whereby his labour and the product of his labour, *opus proprium*, present themselves to the worker as *opus alienum*, 'aliented' labour

[5].

Although Bourdieu indicates the importance of consumption to the production and reproduction of social differentiation, he is unable to explain the ways in which consumer practices may crosscut given social divisions, and tends to ignore all the other identity projects in the development and performance of which goods and services are employed. In the end, whether expressed through images of an overarching class interest or subsuming discourse, Bourdieu eliminates the possibility of dominated groups acting as arbiters of cultural form.

appropriation, recontextualisation, resistance

Rather than viewing consumer behaviour as a simple expression of the will of Capital, or of already existing, and seemingly immutable, social divisions, consumption, as de Certeau (1984) suggests, can be conceived of as a productive activity - a *poeisis* - which leaves neither the subject, object or 'system' untouched. The dominant meanings inscribed into goods and texts in the act of their initial 'production' are not automatically and unproblematically folded into the psychic life of those at whom they are aimed. 'Meaning' is also produced by consumers in the usage they make of those goods and texts in the practice of their everyday lives. So while the 'elements' used may be determined in the sphere of production, *how* these are used - to what ends and with what effects - cannot be so easily pre-established. As I suggested earlier, for example, despite the enormous efforts made through advertising, design and the media to create markets for given products, profits are always dependent upon the ability of marketing staff to interpret the changes in the way in which products are used in on-going social relations.

One of the first attempts to articulate this gap between the lived practices of consumption of 'subordinate groups', and the plans and programmes of powerful institutions can be found in the work of what has come to be known as 'subcultural analysis' (Hebdige, 1979; Willis, 1978). Focusing on the 'subcultural worlds' of mainly white, male, working-class youth, these studies emphasised the ways in which subcultural groupings used commodities as signifiers in an active process of constructing 'oppositional' identities. Through their symbolic

work of 'consuming' material cultue, these groups translated commodified objects from an 'alienable' to an 'inalienable' condition; that is, from being an apparent symbol of estrangement and price value to being an artefact with particular inseparable connotations. Practices of consumption were therefore key elements in the production of an inalienable world in which objects were firmly integrated into the development of particular social relations and group identity. Thus, these studies insisted that consumption was not a passive process, but an active one involving the signifying practice which puts to use the polysemic quality of commodities as signs [6].

More recently, the implications of this subcultural analysis have been developed into a more thorough-going view of contemporary consumer culture as a self-conscious critique of traditional representations of 'mass consumption'. The stress on consumer 'creativity' and polysemy has been allied to concepts derived from textual analysis to highlight the 'popular pleasures' of, and 'play' of identities within, contemporary cultures of consumption. Increasingly, consumers are represented as 'cultural experts' or *bricoleurs*, assembling their own distinctive combinations of style - 'lifestyles' - from a wealth of available signifiers (Chambers, 1986; Fiske, 1989; Mort, 1989).

Both 'subcultural analysis' and the more recent 'pleasures of consumption' thesis have involved not inconsiderable gains over both the 'structural pessimism' of the mass culture critique and over those theories that conceptualise consumption simply in terms of social differentation. They have done this through, for example, insisting on seeing social subjects as active agents in the process of their own self-constitution and in indicating how *bricolage* cuts across given social divisions to produce hybrid identities. However, and unsurprisingly, both these explorations of consumption also bear interpretive costs. In particular, as a number of critics have argued (Clarke, 1991; Morris, 1988; Williamson, 1986), from the quite plausible (if increasingly banal) premise that consumption practices cannot be derived from or reduced to a mirror of production - that consumers make meanings in reception and do not simply 'receive' and 'ingest' sent messages - many studies appear to end up disconnecting consumption entirely from the forces and relations of production [7].

Having rescued consumption from the pessimism of the mass culture critique, certain

forms of culturalist analysis end up inverting the errors of earlier accounts. Instead of representing consumer behaviour through an exclusively productionist frame, these accounts project a vision of consumption practices as inherently democratic and implicitly 'subversive'. As Williamson (1986: 14-15) has argued, the blatant populism of the 'pleasures of consumption' thesis leads to the virtual abandonment of any form of critical distance: all consumer behaviour becomes imbued with a romantic glow of creativity leaving no room for questions of textual quality and the 'privileged creativity necessary for the production of cultural texts and artefacts' (Willis, 1990: 153) [8].

In effect, through attempting to indicate that the cultural forms and meanings of consumption are not reducible to class and the economic - 'that consumerism doesn't simply mirror production' (Nava, 1987: 209) - cultural analysis ends up treating consumption 'as a quasi-autonomous reality diverging from another "reality" called "production" - which after Marxism, we are supposed to know quite enough about for the time being' (Morris, 1988: 21). However, if, for example, the 'economic' itself is not reducible to 'class and the economic' as traditionally conceived; if 'economic activity' is itself 'cultural', as I suggested in chapters two and three, then such a division between 'production' and 'consumption' cannot be maintained. Rather, the relationship between 'production' and 'consumption' is one of 'dislocation'. In other words, instead of representing 'production' and 'consumption' as two fully constituted objectivities, they should be conceptualised in terms of mutual constitution, or as Laclau (1990: 24) puts it, as 'relational semi-identities' involved in 'unstable relations of imbrication' [9].

In some forms of contemporary cultural analysis 'imbrication' loses out to binary opposition as a dealienated sphere of 'consumption' is counterposed to an alienated, deskilled and already determined world of paid employment. While exploding the myth of the 'passive consumer', cultural analysis institutes in its place the myth of the totally determined, deskilled worker. A routinised, impoverished world of paid work becomes the 'other' against which the 'pleasures of consumption thesis' constitutes its identity.

In their different ways, the work of both Goldthorpe et al (1969) and that of Roy (1973) attests to the relations of imbrication between 'production' and 'consumption'. For Goldthorpe et al. the affluent worker's relationship to work was primarily explicable in terms of 'his' (*sic*) identity as a consumer, whereas for Roy the symbolic construction of work-based identity involved the deployment and utilisation of many of the forms, interests and communications of 'leisure'. As the work of these authors indicates, it is impossible to maintain a simple division between 'production' and consumption', and between 'work' and 'non-work' identity, since these two areas of activity continually overlap.

According to de Certeau (1984) it is the 'practices of everyday life' which disrupt both the pessimistic logic of the 'mass culture critique' and the binary oppositions of the 'pleasures of consumption' thesis, and link together 'work' and 'leisure'. These practices, de Certeau (1984: 21) suggests, 'imply a *logic of the operation of actions relative to types of situations*. This logic, which turns on *circumstances*, has as its precondition...the non-autonomy of its field of action'. Thus, these practices present themselves essentially as "arts of making" (*arts de faire*) i.e., as 'combinatory or utilizing modes of consumption' (de Certeau, 1984: xv).

This 'art of making' can be conceptualized as an active process, but also as a hidden one because it is scattered over areas defined and occupied by systems of 'production', and because the steadily increasing expansion of these systems no longer leaves the subjects of these practices - 'consumers' or 'users' - any place in which they can indicate what they make or do with the products and representations of these systems.

> To a rationalised, clamorous, and spectacular production corresponds another production, called "consumption". The latter is devious, it is dispersed, but it insinuates itself everywhere, silently and almost invisibly, because it does not manifest itself through its own products, but rather through ways of using the products imposed by a dominant order (de Certeau, 1984: xii-xiii).

In this way, the polarity between 'production' and 'consumption' is dissolved. Practices of consumption have no proper place of their own. Rather they operate within a space delineated by, but not equivalent to, systems of production. Therefore the subject of consumption does not manifest itself through its own 'autonomous' representations, but in relation to ways of using representations and products 'from above'. In other words, the relationship between 'production' and 'consumption' is one of 'dislocation'.

Procedures of consumption do not simply map onto the spaces delineated by systems of production, rather they trace 'indeterminate' trajectories that appear meaningless 'since they do not cohere with the constructed, written and prefabricated space through which they move' (de Certeau, 1984: 34).

> Although they are composed with the vocabularies of established languages (those of television, newspapers, supermarkets, or museum sequences) and although they remain subordinated to the prescribed syntactical forms (temporal modes of schedules, paradigmatic orders of spaces, etc.), the trajectories trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which they develop (1984: xviii).

As I indicated earlier, this art of consumption leaves neither the subject, object or system untouched. Although consumers are caught within the grid of 'production' they are not reduced to it. In this sense, as de Certeau argues, 'assimilation' doesn't necessarily mean becoming similar to what absorbs, but rather suggests a situation in which one makes something similar to what one is, establishing it as one's own through appropriating or reappropriating it. In this way, practices of consumption can be seen to remain 'other' within the very colonization that outwardly assimilates them - they 'escape without leaving'; through their activity consumers insinuate 'countless differences into the dominant text'[10].

In exploring the relationship between 'production' and 'consumption' de Certeau's operative distinctions are between 'strategy' and 'tactics', 'place' and 'space'. Systems of 'production', he argues, operate with a 'strategic' logic. Here 'strategy' refers to

the calculus of force-relationships that becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an "environment". A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as '*proper*' (*propre*) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, "clienteles", "targets", or "objects" of research). Political, economic, and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model (de Certeau, 1984: xix).

'Strategy' proceeds as if it has its own 'God's Eye View' from which it can reflect on the everyday. It involves a victory of *place* over time, and a mastery of places through sight. In this sense, the exercise of strategic power is a *panoptic practice*[11]. As de Certeau conceives of it, 'strategy' shares certain similarities with Hacking's (1986) vector of 'labelling from above'. Through the interplay of power and knowledge 'strategy' constructs a 'proper' place - a reality - that people caught within its grid are encouraged to make their own.

The power of strategic calculation lies in its ability to divide, collate and classify. However, it is precisely through this analytic fragmentation that it loses sight of what it claims to represent. In seeking to grasp the 'Real', strategy manages instead to construct a 'reality'. This reality only comes into existence through a process of 'splitting'that generates a 'surplus' which, of necessity, must remain 'other'. For de Certeau the everyday is the space of this 'other'. 'Strategy'

> can grasp only the material used by consumer practices - a material which is obviously that imposed on everyone by production - and not the formality proper to these practices, their surreptious and guileful "movement", that is, the very activity of "making do". The strength of these computations lies in their ability to divide, but this ana-lytical ability eliminates the possibility of representing the tactical trajectories which, according to their own criteria, select fragments taken from the vast ensembles of production in order to compose new stories with them (1984: 35).

Whereas 'strategy' can count only *what* is used, it cannot grasp the *ways of using* deployed by consumers. The latter constitute the 'leftover', or 'surplus', generated by the very success of strategic rationality, and forever beyond its gaze. As de Certeau (1984: 69-70) argues, consumer practices become invisible 'in the universe of codification and generalized transparency', because 'they have no legitimacy with respect to productivist rationality...what is left behind by ethnological colonization acquires the status of a private activity, is charged with symbolic investments concerning everyday activity, and functions under the sign of collective or individual particulars'. To the strategic gaze, therefore, only the effects (the quantity and locus of consumed objects) of the multiform and fragmented activity of consumers remain perceptible; their actual 'ways of operating' circulate without being seen, 'discernible only through the objects that they move about and erode'. Through their signifying practices consumers trace what de Certeau terms 'lignes d'erre': wandering trajectories that form unforseeable routes, partly unreadable paths across a 'proper' place.

In contrast to the 'strategic' rationality of systems of 'production', procedures of consumption are 'tactical' in character: habits of action and 'ways of operating' that cannot count on a 'proper' (a spatial or institutional localization) place, nor thus on a borderline distinguishing 'production' as a visible totality. The space of the 'tactic' is the space of the 'other'. As such it must operate within a territory delineated 'from above'.

> a tactic is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. No delimitation of an exteriority, then, provides it with the condition necessary for autonomy...It does not have the means to keep to itself, at a distance, in a position of withdrawl, foresight, and self-collection...It does not, therefore, have the options of planning general strategy and viewing the adversary as a whole within distinct, visible, and objectifiable space. It operates in isolated actions, blow by blow. It takes advantages of "opportunities" and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its own position, and plan raids. What it wins it cannnot keep. This nowhere gives a tactic mobility, to be sure, but a mobility that must accept the chance offerings of the moment. It must

> vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches on them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse (de Certeau,1984:37).

Because it does not have a proper place, a tactic depends on time. While 'strategies depend on the erosion of time through the establishment of 'place', 'tactics' depend on the utilization of time, of the opportunities it presents, and 'also of the play it introduces into the foundations of power' (de Certeau, 1984: 39).

As de Certeau (1984: 40) makes clear, tactical 'procedures of consumption' trace errant trajectories that fail to conform to the logic of 'place'. In this sense, consumer practices traverse strategic distinctions between 'work' and 'non-work', for example; they insinuate themselves everywhere. In contrast to the 'pleasures of consumption' thesis, de Certeau points to the presence of 'enunciative' practices and tactical techniques of consumption *within* the 'economic' sphere. '*La perruque*' ('the wig'), for example, is an employee's own 'work' disguised as paid work for his or her employer. It differs form pilfering in that nothing of material value is stolen, and it cannot be categorized as absenteeism because the worker is firmly located at the 'place' of work: '*la perruque* may be as simple a matter as a secretary's writing a love letter on "company time" or as complex as a cabinet-maker's "borrowing" a lathe to make a piece of furniture for his living room'. In effect, la perruque is a tactic whereby workers temporarily turn company time into time of their own. According to de Certeau (1984: 29), this practice is the work-based version of a tactic known outside the workplace (i.e. in another *place*) as *bricolage*. In other words, *la perruque* does not obey the 'law of place', rather it traverses the frontiers dividing time, place, and type of action into one part assigned for 'work' and one part assigned to 'leisure'. As de Certeau (1989: 29) suggests viewed in this way it becomes apparent that 'the dividing line no longer falls between work and lesiure. These two areas of activity flow together. They repeat and reinforce each other'.

Although 'tactics' are 'an art of the weak' (though not of the 'unfree') - those 'lacking their own ideologies and institutions; those without a 'proper place' - their very existence attests to the limits of strategic rationality and, thus, of 'labeling from above'. Lodged within de Certeau's operational schema it is possible to detect a simple (and quite psychoanalytic), but

not simplistic, moral: that the dynamics of subjectification are more complicated and contingent then simply identifiying with the attributes, attitudes and behaviours prescribed by technologies and practices of regulation. As de Certeau (1984: xx) suggests, tactical 'procedures of consumption' introduce a Brownian movement into systems of production. While the 'wandering trajectories' of consumers are 'scattered over areas defined and occupied by systems of "production", they are never determined nor captured by these systems within which they move, and which they cannot keep at a distance. Rather than being either completely 'autonomous' or 'totally determined', consumer behaviour is 'nomadic'. As Grossberg (1988: 384-387) has argued

> nomadic subjects are like commuters moving between different sites of daily life, who are always mobile but for whom the particular mobilities and stabilities are never entirely directed, nor guaranteed...[they] are are always empowered and disempowered, shaped and reshaped, by the effectivities of the practices (trajectories, apparatuses etc) within which their agency is located.

This subject's shape and effectivity are never fully guaranteed because the subject is a 'lack in the structure' (Zizek, 1989: 175). There is the 'consumer' because 'production' can never fully constitute itself as an 'objectivity'. The relationship between 'systems of production' and 'procedures of consumption' is therefore one of 'dislocation'.

concluding remarks

In this chapter I have attempted to complete my fledgling framework for charting the discursive construction of work-based subjectivity and identity by focusing upon ways of analysing what people make or do with the technologies and representations to which they are subjected; in other words, the focus of the analysis shifted away from the processes of 'labelling from above' and concentrated instead upon the procedures of consumption 'of those so-labelled'.

In the first part of the chapter, I described how the organization of work is increasingly structured around the character of the 'sovereign consumer' and charted the consequences of this development for the construction and regulation of work-based subjectivity and identity. In particular, I focused upon the ways in which the 'culture of the customer' brooks no oppostion between the mode of self-presentation required of people as consumers, and that required by employees and managers.

Having argued that an understanding of work-based subjectivity and identity in the contemporary moment necessitates an exploration of 'the ways of operating' of consumers, the second part of the chapter concentrated on delineating and critically examining various conceptualizations of consumer behaviour within the social sciences. I indicated that representations of consumption circulating within the social sciences have tended to veer between two extremes of 'structural pessimism' (the 'Mass Culture Critique'), on the one hand, and a 'heady romanticism' (the 'pleasures of consumption' thesis), on the other.

One way out of this pervasive dualism, I suggested, is provided by the work of Michel de Certeau. Through analysing procedures of consumption as 'everyday life' de Certeau disrupts the pessimistic logic of the Mass Culture Critique, and undermines the implicit voluntarism of the pleasures of consumption thesis. While consumption is still conceptualised as an active process, it is also represented as a hidden one because it is scattered across areas dominated by systems of production. Practices of consumption have no 'proper' place of their own, and only operate within a space delineated by, but in no way equivalent to, systems of production. Thus the subject of consumption - the 'consumer', or 'user' - does not manifest itself through its own autonomous representations but only in relation to its ways of using representations from above. For de Certeau the relationship between 'production' and 'consumption' is therefore one of 'dislocation'. The consumer's shape and effectivity are never fully guaranteed because the consumer is a 'lack in the structure'. There is the 'consumer' because 'production' never manages to constitute itself as an 'objectivity'.

In the first part of this thesis (chapters two, three and four) I have attempted to construct a partial framework for thinking about how people are made up at work. In the second part of the thesis (chapters five, six and seven) I wish to deploy this framework to examine the

discursive construction of work-based subjectivity and identity in one particular sector of the U.K. economy during the 1980s and 1990s. I have chosen to focus upon the retailing industry because it offers a particularly pertinent terrain of enquiry for charting the changing relationship between production, consumption and everyday life in the U.K. over the last ten years or so. As indicated in chapter four, for example, it is in areas such as retailing, where the quality of interactive service delivery has become an important source of value, that the introduction of customer focused technologies and practices of 'Excellence' are most pronounced.

However, before drawing upon an empirical study of recent developments in British retailing to explore how people are 'made up' at work, I want to examine the constitutive role of retailing in the on-going process of economic and cultural de-differentation in the U.K. In other words, I want to unpack 'what we talk about when we talk about retail' in the contemporary moment. In the next chapter, therefore, I begin by delineating the cultural contours of retailing, indicating the importance of the retail sector to the mode of existence and reproduction of contemporary consumer culture. I then outline some of the major 'logistical' developments which have allowed retailers to 'make up' the consumer more intricately then ever before and which have permitted co-ordinated flexibility in the face of increasingly competitive and dynamic markets. Lastly, I consider some of the subjectivizing aspects of contemporary retail change, both for consumers, and, increasingly, for retail employees. I suggest that attempts by retailers to 'make up' the consumer have consequences for the ways in which the social relations of employment are imagined within the retail industry.

Notes

1. I use 'character' in MacIntyre's (1985: 28) sense of that term:

> A *character* is an object of regard by the members of the culture generally or by some significant segment of them. He furnishes them with a cultural and moral ideal. Hence the demand is that ...role and personality be fused. Social type and psychological type are required to coincide. The *character* morally legitimates a mode of social existence.

2. According to Bauman (1988: 221-22), 'seduction'

> is the paramount tool of integration (of the reproduction of domination) in a consumer society. It is made possible once the market succeeds in making the consumers dependent upon itself. Market-dependency is achieved through the destruction of such skills (technical, social, psychological, existential) which do not entail the use of marketable commodities; the more complete the destruction, the more necessary become new skills which point organically to market-supplied implements...New technical, social, psychological and existential skills of the consumers are such as to be practicable only in conjunction with marketable commodities; rationality comes to mean the ability to make the right purchasing decisions...

On the other hand 'repression' is a form of 'panoptic' power.

> It employs surveillance, it is aimed at regimentation of the body, and it is diffused (made invisible) in the numerous institutionalizations of knowledge-based expertise...It is the continuous, tangible presence of repression as a viable alternative which makes seduction unchallengable. In addition, repression is

indispensable to reach the areas seduction cannot, and is not meant to, reach: it remains the paramount tool of subordination of the considerable margin of society which cannot be absorbed by market dependency and hence, in market terms, consists of 'non-consumers'...Repression reforges the market unattractiveness of non-consumer existence into the unattractiveness of alternatives to market dependency.

3. C. Wright Mills (1951: 237) famous indictment of the superficiality of modern 'leisure' expresses the traditional representation of consumption exactly:

> Each day men sell little pieces of themselves in order to try and buy them back each night with the coin of fun.

4. For Campbell (1987: 227) the dynamism of modern consumerism, and ultimately of the 'West', depends upon a tension generated between the logic of rationalisation and the logic of 'desire'.

5. Ironically, as Miller (1987: 156) argues, in appearing to view the working-class as some form of 'authentic' humanity, whose relationship to immediacy is both proper and desirable, Bourdieu positions himself within the same old philosophical anthropology of production upon which the 'mass culture critique' is founded.

6. As Clarke (1991: 110-111), for example, has indicated, subcultural analysis has come in for substantial criticism on a variety of grounds. One of the most trenchant criticisms has concerned the discussion of the consumption practices of these subcultural groups in terms of 'resistance'. At one level, it is argued, subcultural analyses are unspecific about what exactly is being resisted. Secondly, there is no substantial political analysis of the content or direction of these ostensible resistances. It became apparent, for example, that white, male working-class subcultures of resistance were frequently implicated in racist and sexist practices. As a result it was not clear why their 'resistance' should be universally celebrated, nor why such

resistance should be built upon politically, as the subculturalists argued. Finally, these studies have been criticized for representing subcultures as too much the product of consumers as active, rational agents; in other words as subjects 'to whom an excess of consciousness is attributed, thus neglecting the contradictory and overdetermined character of subjectivity' (Clarke, 1991: 111).

7. Not all work in this vein is susceptible to such criticism. In an article charting the changing 'meaning' of the Italian scooter cycle, Hebdige (1981) indicates how viewing consumption as an active process has consequences for the traditional conceptualization of 'production' as a largely autonomous and determining force in the construction of social relations. According to Hebdige (1981: 44-66), the motor scooter was originally produced and marketed as the feminine equivalent of the 'macho' motorbike. These gender terms stood for wide range of associated connotations of industrialization and commodification, through which the childlike scooter, with its enclosed machine parts, reproduced in its relationship to the motorbike the basic asymmetry in the status of the sexes. These images were transformed, however, in a manner not envisaged by the producers - but later utilised and actively encouraged by them - but which was established through articulation with emergent polarities within British youth cultures. The motorbike became associated with the 'Rockers' in contrast to the motor scooter's appropriation by the 'Mods' in the process of their own self-constitution; the latter representing a 'softer', more European sense of style in opposition to the Rockers' 'hard' American image. The new formation was consistent with, but determined by or reducible to, the original meanings inscribed into the scooter cycle in its initial production.

Hebdige's analysis indicates the centrality of 'dislocation' in understanding the relationship between forces of production and practices of consumption. It demonstrates both industry's careful reading of the market to try and differentiate material forms on the basis of already existing social divisions, in this case gender, and also the fact that the transformations of these objects in Britain provided the foundation for the formation of new social groups to whom consumer style was so integral they could not be considered prior to thse material changes through which they expressed and thereby constituted themselves. In so doing, Hebdige

attributes agency to both the consumer and the producer, whilst still retaining a sense of the larger historical forces emanating from social and technological change.

However, possibilities of appropriation and recontextualisation are never uniform, but vary for any given object and subject according to context. Hebdige's article indicates, for example, that although the 'meaning' of motor scooters and motorbikes was transformed according to the conceptions of youth groups, the original distinction promoted in the initial design and marketing of the goods was that of gender. There is nothing in the later trajectory of these goods to suggest that the ability of these objects to reproduce gender asymmetry was in any way deflected by the 'recontextualisation' represented by these later shifts.

8. This rise to prominence of this type of analysis - what Morley has recently termed the "Dont' worry, be happy" school of cultural studies - in the 1980s is obviously no accident. As both Williamson (1986) and Morris (1988) suggest the rising trajectory of the 'pleasures thesis' reflects a shift in attitudes within the academy in the face of the apparent success of the 'New Right' in colonising popular pleasures.

9. Though, as Laclau (1990: 24) continues, 'this does not mean, of course, that an area of the social cannot become autonomous and establish to a greater or lesser degree, a seperate identity. But this seperation and autonomization, like everything else, has specific conditions of existence which establish their limits at the same time'.

10. As de Certeau (1984: xvii) makes clear, although 'consumption' is an activity of the 'weak', - 'choices are provided but not choices over choices or over the conditions under which choices are made - the cultural agenda itself' (Willis, 1990:132) - and that 'consumers' are fast becoming a 'silent majority' in the productionist universe, these 'users' are not a homogeneous group. Rather

> The procedures allowing the re-use of products are linked together in a kind of obligatory language, and their functioning is related to social situations and power relationships...Similar strategic deployments, when acting on different relationships

of force, do not produce identical effects. Hence the necessity of differentiating both the "actions" or "engagements" (in the military sense) that the system of products effects within the consumer grid, and the various kinds of room to maneuver left for consumers by the situations in which they exercise their "art"'.

11. As de Certeau suggests the establishment of a break between a place appropriated as one's own and its 'other' is accompanied by a number of important effects. First, if the 'proper' is a victory of place over time then it allows one a certain independence with respect to circumstances. Secondly, the mastery of places through sight makes possible a '*panoptic practice* proceeding form a place whence the eye can transform foreign forces into objects that can be observed and measured, and thus control and "include" them within its scope of vision. To be able to see (far into the distance) is also to be able to predict, to run ahead of time by reading a space' (de Certeau, 1984: 36). Lastly, in these 'strategies' a specific type of *knowledge* can be delineated, one sustained and created by the *power* to provide oneself with one's own *place*. 'In other words, *a certain power is the precondition of this knowledge* and not merely its effect or its attribute. It makes this knowledge possible and at the same time determines its characteristics' (de Certeau, 1984: 36).

PART TWO

chapter five

the de-differentiation of economy and culture: retailing in Britain in the 1980s and 1990s

Introduction

As the 1980s drew to a close a plethora of retrospective articles and programmes appeared in the media analysing, panning and celebrating perceived key moments and transitions in collective British life during the previous decade. A common theme in both 'business' (*The Money Programme* 7/1/1990) and 'cultural' (*The Late Show* 15/09/1989) programming of this type was the representation of Britain's 'retail revolution' as one of the most significant social phenomenon of the age. The ubiquitous presence of retail, it was argued, extended well beyond the simple proliferation of shops and shopping centres. Retail had, in an important sense, become the defining motif of the decade, 'an approach, an ideology almost, permeating the culture'. It had, at its core, 'a celebration of the marketplace', which echoed strongly with 'the prevailing political climate'(Gardner & Sheppard, 1989: 66). As one commentator put it, 'retailing is...virtually the paradigm of the "enterprise culture"'(Bamfield, 1988). It is not difficult to reason why.

Firstly, retailing can be seen to have promoted 'enterprise' through its role in encouraging the progressive penetration of the 'market' into all areas of social and cultural life. Secondly, retailers such as George Davis (Next), Ralph Halpern (Burton) and Sophie Mirman (Sock Shop) were represented as exemplary 'enterprising' individuals, exhibiting boldness, vigour, self-reliance and energy in the pursuit of business 'excellence'.

From dull distributive cypher mediating between manufacturers and the 'public', retail was now 'imaged' as a 'leading edge' sector of Britain's 'new service economy'[1]. Murray (1988a; 1988b), for example, argued that developments within the retail sector were playing a crucial role in 'making Fordism flexible'; that retail was a principal initiator of the shift to a new regime of accumulation based on flexible forms of production and increasingly specialised consumption practices.

> In Britain, the groundwork for the new system was laid not in manufacturing but in retailing...the revolution in retailing reflects new principles of production, a new pluralism of production, and a new importance for innovation. As such it marks a

shift to a post-Fordist age [Murray, 1988b: 11].

Increased concentration and centralisation within the retail industry, in conjunction with the widespread introduction of Electronic Data Processsing (EDP) technologies has facilitated the organization of the retail/distribution system and, increasingly, the production chain as well, as a 'logistic' package, allowing co-ordinated flexibility in the face of market changes. This has permitted retailers to track customers more closely than ever before and to offer a significantly expanded, but carefully integrated, range of 'mass produced individualities'. According to Murray (1988b: 11) these changes are steering 'the high street from being retailers of goods to retailers of style'. For Lash (1988) they are indicative of the 'cultural logic' of the 'new era'. In other words, the 'new regime of accumulation' is simultaneously a 'regime of signification'. That is, 'a greater and greater proportion of all goods produced comprises cultural goods' (Lash, 1990:39).

In effect what is being attested to here, and in programmes like *The Late Show* and *The Money Programme*, is the crucial contribution of retailing to that wide-ranging, and on-going, process of de-differentiation whereby the 'Corporate' becomes at one with 'Culture' (Jameson, 1990: 25; Lash, 1988). According to Fredric Jameson (1984:85-87), as the process of market dependency intensifies 'everything in our social life...become[s] cultural'. As a vanguard of this process retail can claim to be one of the foremost 'cultural' sites of contemporary consumer society; an arena where the distinctions between 'production', 'consumption' and 'everyday life' are progressively blurring.

For social scientists interested in the ways in which the 'economic' articulates with the 'cultural' in an era of widespread and intensive change - whether conceptualised as neo-Fordist, post-Fordist, flexibly specialised or disorganized capitalist - retailing would appear to offer an extremely pertinent terrain of inquiry. Nonetheless, the sector continues to be largely neglected by social scientists. Once again, the dominant productionist bias that has inhibited social scientific discourse - only those industries that *really make* something are important - can be detected in the marginalisation of retailing from the research agenda.

In part, this chapter is an attempt to remedy this deficiency. However, my aim is not to examine the economic importance of retailing as a 'wealth creator', nor is it to delineate the

'political economy' of retailing. Rather, I am interested in exploring the ways in which the economic *folds into* the cultural in the practice of retailing in contemporary Britain.

I want to examine the constitutive role of retailing in the process of economic and cultural de-differentiation in the U.K. As I suggested at the end of the previous chapter, I want to unpack 'what we talk about when we talk about retail' in the contemporary moment. To this end, first, I will delineate the cultural contours of retailing, indicating the importance of the retail sector to the mode of existence and reproduction of contemporary consumer society in the U.K. Secondly, I will outline some of the major 'logistical' developments which have allowed retailers to stay closer to the customer than ever before and which have permitted co-ordinated flexibility in the face of increasingly competitive and dynamic markets. This move to a more 'flexible system of accumulation' within the retail sector can be seen to involve, at one and the same time, the progressive 'culturalisation' of retailing. Lastly, I will consider the subjectivizing aspects of contemporary retail change, both for consumers and, increasingly, for retail employees. I will argue that attempts by retailers to 'make up' the consumer have consequences for the way in which the social relations of employment are imagined within the retail sector.

the cultural contours of retailing

According to a number of commentators (Murray, 1988a; 1988b; Gardner & Sheppard, 1989), during the last decade the retail sector has played a major role in spearheading the progressive penetration of the market into all walks of British life, encouraging and facilitating the spread of consumer culture. Indeed, some have gone as far as to suggest that retail has gradually taken on '*the* leading role in the consumer economy' (Gardner & Sheppard, 1989: 66) by making more and more people dependent upon itself for their own reproduction. In other words, retail has colonized the everyday through a process of increasing 'market dependency'. According to Zygmunt Bauman 'market dependency is guaranteed once men and women, now consumers, cannot proceed with the business of life without turning themselves to the logic of the market' (Bauman, 1988: 222).

Once this degree of dependence upon the market in general, and retail in particular, is achieved, the skill of shopping attains a new status. According to Bauman (1987), rather than being one amongst many skills, it becomes, for the consumer, the skill to deputize for all others. Shopping therefore becomes constitutive of subjectivity in a fundamental way. Consumers need the market as a cornerstone of their sense of certainty and self-confidence because, with shopping paramount, the 'certainty that counts most and promises to compensate for all other (absent) certainties is one related to buying choices' (Bauman, 1987: 165).

At the same time, shopping not only provides a 'life project', it also becomes 'a pleasurable leisure experience' and an inexhaustible treasury of sensual stimuli (Featherstone, 1990). One of the notable recent developments in retailing, the move to out - and edge-of - town shopping complexes, has involved a major re-definition of the 'shopping experience' on the part of retailers and developers. Because 'the consumer is going to spend a relatively long time in the centre it is necessary to provide a high quality of finishing and facilities', it is argued, simultaneously making the retail centre a leisure venue will 'encourage customers to stay longer and spend more money' (Retail Week, 23/3/1990: 16). In these retail centres, the focus is directed less towards mass market 'routine shopping' but rather towards a more relaxed, and market segmented, 'leisure shopping' experience. Thus 'food courts' have appeared, along with cinema multiplexes and children's play areas and 'fantasy lands', while ordinary elements of the shopping environment such as lifts and escalators have been customised to become part of a wider leisure spectacle. Although nothing on the same scale as the Edmonton Mall in Canada, or some of the larger U.S. shopping complexes, has appeared yet in the U.K., the leisure element at both the MetroCentre in Gateshead, and the Merry Hill development in Dudley have been integral to their success (Retail Week, 23/3/1990: 16).

In the process of redefining the shopping experience, both emotionally and geographically, through the out-of-town leisure development, retail itself is transformed. As shopping is reconceptualised as *the* premiere leisure activity in contemprary consumer society, retailing is transformed into a major cultural site.

With market dependent consumption playing a greater constitutive role in the formation of subjectivity and identity, the reproduction of the market, and therefore of the retail sector, requires the continual creation of new ways for people to be. Hence the increasing importance

of the symbolic expertise of marketing, design and advertising, underpinned by knowledges and techniques of subjectivity, to the continued growth of the retail sector. These disciplines have played a vital role in the transmutation of commodities and services into desires and fantasies and vice-versa. As I suggested in chapter four, they are not mere cyphers, simply reflecting already existing social and attitudinal difference, but active interveners, constructing differences and distinctions. In other words, they actively 'make up' the consumer.

Their major contribution to the development of the retail sector during the last decade has been the discourse of 'life-styling': the combination of design and visual communication with techniques of market segmentation. In contrast with what might be called "supplier-style" retailing, in which 'the key to success...has been a focus on homogeneity in retailing operations', life-styling is a policy of 'tailoring a retail offering closely to the life-styles of a specific target-market segment' (Blackwell & Wayne Talarzyk, 1983: 7-8). Basically, this means 'repositioning upmarket' in order to 'add value'.

So while lifestyling actively creates difference and constructs distinctions, it is also about polarisation. It segments the market in order to target the better-off, those with disposable income, whilst screening out the poor and disadvantaged. The 'ideal' consumer that emerges from the life-style grid tends to be a very particular creation, remarkably similar, in many ways, to the competitive individual subject of neo-liberal political discourse.

The expertise of design, marketing and image construction constitutes consumers as individual actors seeking to maximise the worth of their existence to themselves by assembling a life-style (or life-styles) through personalised acts of choice in a world of goods and services. Here is one leading retail design company's portrait of the 'new consumer':

> consumers have changed in the last decade...consumers today...are discriminating individuals exercising choice in an increasingly service-based economy. They are more aware of their rights and have been encouraged to make choices and stand up for themselves...consumers individual needs therefore have to be recognised, not just the needs of the consumer en masse (Fitch - RS plc, 1989 : 2).

This 'consumer' has the 'right' to freedom and variety of choice and the parallel 'obligation' to take responsibility for the choices made and to make the most of his or her own individual existence. In effect, the consumer is constituted as an autonomous, responsible, self-regulating and self-actualising individual actor - what Nikolas Rose terms an enterprising subject; a self that 'calculates about itself and works upon itself in order to better itself' (Rose, 1990: 7).

But if this is the sovereign consumer of 'life-styling', what happens to all those who don't fit the picture? The answer is quite simple. Those who do not enter the 'life-style' grid - those who fall into non key-target segments - are effectively marginalised in consumer society. In a market-dependent consumer culture those whose consumption does not matter much for the successful reproduction of capital are virtually non-people. Indeed, the maintainance of the self-identity of the enterprising consumer requires the constitution of non-consumers both as a benchmark against which to measure relative success and as a threat to be vigilant against (Bauman, 1987).

The increasing polarisation between enterprising consumers - the seduced - and the effective non-consumer - the repressed - is arguably not a product of the 'malfunctioning' of consumer culture but an essential component of its mode of existence and its reproduction (Gorz, 1989; Zizek, 1989). Consumer culture can be said to create its own repressed by representing the enterprising sovereign consumer not as an exploiter, nor as a selfish egoist, but as a pathfinder, a pattern-setter whose example should be imitated; a pioneer on the road to self- fulfilment that every civilised human should aspire to follow, and a confirmation that such aspiration is realistic (Bourdieu, 1984; Bauman; 1988; Bonner & du Gay, 1992). As Bauman has argued

> The tragedy of consumer society is that it cannot reproduce itself without reproducing inequalities on an ever rising level and without insisting that all social problems must be translated into individual needs satisfiable through the individual consumption of marketable commodities. By so doing it daily generates its own handicapped, whose needs cannot be met through the market and who therefore undermine the very condition of its reproduction. In a truly dialectical manner,

> consumer society cannot cure the ills it generates except by taking them to its own grave (Bauman, 1987: 187).

As a leading 'player' in consumer society, retail finds itself at the heart of this dismal paradox. On the one hand, the rise of 'retail culture' can appear to be a source of democratic possibility. Retail has made a major contribution to the explosion in marketed material culture available for consumption, and to widening the quantity of possible 'ways of being' for consumers. At the same time however, changing locational and marketing policies, for example, aimed at, and constituting, the 'new consumer' - the enterprising, or consuming, self - have served to effectively marginalise many of the people who do not fit into the retailers reality 'grid'.

'face to back' visibility: the logistics of "retail engineering"

The growing 'culturalisation' of retailing in the U.K. is underpinned by a profound transformation of the distribution system (Murray, 1988a; 1988b). As I suggested earlier, increased levels of concentration and centralisation within the retail industry, combined with the widespread deployment of EDP technologies, have permitted the retail/distribution system, and, increasingly, the whole production chain as well, to be arranged as a 'logistic' package (Retail Week, 02/08/1990). According to Murray (1988a: 11), for example, because the whole chain can now be organised as a single system, retailers are able to enjoy a hitherto unavailable degree of 'co-ordinated flexibility' in the face of market changes . The development of 'retail engineering', as this systematization has come to be named, allows retailers to delineate, construct and monitor 'the customer' more intricately than ever before, and to extend significantly the range of 'mass produced individualities' available for consumption. In other words, the 'front to back' visibility accorded to retail organizations through the practice of 'retail engineering' facilitates and enhances the transformation of retailing into an arena of signification.

In the following section I will outline the major processes at work within the retail sector

over roughly the last three decades that have helped to transform the whole distribution system into a 'logistic' package.

concentration

Retail capital is one part of a wider circuit of capital located between manufacturing capital and the final consumer. It manifests itself as a number of retail enterprises competing with one another and with other *forms* of capital (Ducatel & Blomley, 1990: 208-225). One obvious way in which retailers attempt to gain competitive advantage over other retailers and other forms of capital is through the process of concentration. Indeed, one of the main features of both the U.K. and U.S. retail sectors since the end of world war two has been the degree of concentration that has occurred. The twin features of this process have been the growth in market share attributable to the largest retailers and the local market concentration of retail outlets which has taken place at the same time. The scale of change in U.K. retailing can be assessed by the evidence from the 1950 census of distribution which suggests that there were 583,000 shops in the country at that time. Since then somewhere in the region of 250,000 retail outlets have disappeared (Sparkes, 1989: 44).

This huge change in retailing size has been associated with considerable mutations in structure and organizational type. The major development has been the rapid growth of the multiples at the expense of the traditional independent retailer and the co-operative retail sector. In 1980, for example, the large retail multiples (those with over ten or more outlets) accounted for 54% of all retail trade through 1,300 outlets. By 1986, the multiples were achieving a 60% share through less than 900 stores (Euromonitor, 1990: 41-42)[2]. Overall, the retail sector can be seen to be shrinking in terms of the number of outlets, businesses and number of employees, although not in turns of volume, while the sector as a whole has become increasingly dominated and controlled by large companies.

The large multiples gain competitive advantage over the independents mainly from economies of scale and economies of replication. As they have grown larger the multiples have been able to gain from their size in terms of their buying power from suppliers and from administrative centralisation. Thus the process of concentration also entails a parallel move

towards greater centralisation of control. Expansion into new areas (diversification) is also easier due to the size of the enterprise. These types of benefit have also pertained from economies of replication in which a standard, or relatively standard, retail outlet or procedure can be duplicated across a large number of sites. This brings cost savings through conformity of operation, in price systems, for example. Both of these procedures have been aided by the introduction of new technology, a point I will return to in due course. These sorts of advantage are available to the multiples although independents and fragmented co-operatives are often unable to benefit in the same way.

This process of concentration has proceeded through several stages. Firstly, there was the local general store; then in towns and town centres, speciality stores - butchers, greengrocers, haberdashers etc. The innovation of the department store was to locate a number of speciality stores under one roof - to spatially concentrate these specialisms. The discount store sought to undercut the department store by stocking fewer lines, offering less direct service and cutting prices to increase turnover on lower margins (Bluestone & Huff Stevenson, 1981: 25-27). The development of supermarkets and superstores was based in part on an expanded selection of speciality goods in a central location. Finally, shopping malls, hypermarkets and gallerias function in a similar way to the earlier department stores in that they concentrate speciality shops (often multiple's 'segments') in a single location (Murray, 1988:3).

Increased concentration has not led to any diminution of competition, however, rather it has led to intensified competition between retailers on both quality and price (Bluestone & Huff Stevenson, 1981; Rubery et al., 1987). As Craig & Wilkinson (1985: 8) have argued, the main reason for this is that while large retail firms 'can dominate the supply-side, they are faced by a multitude of buyers whose loyalty depends on price and quality. Therefore the collusion between firms to be found in concentrated industries in manufacturing does not exist in retailing and even the largest firms compete hotly with one another'.

Given the 'inherent' uncertainties of final consumption for even large multiples, retailers have sought to extend their influence over areas more amenable to their control, in particular their relations with suppliers and the overall costs of circulation. I will deal with the former first.

the manufacturing-retail capital interface

The continued growth of the large-scale retailing enterprise has considerably altered the relationship between retail capital and manufacturing capital. Whilst the relationship between the two has always contained the possibility of antagonism - manufacturers have attempted to shift the the cost of stockholding and risks on to the retailer, while retailers have tried to shift the burden of cost back up the line to the supplier - the balance of relative power has shifted firmly to the side of the retailer in recent decades. Whereas in the past, manufacturers tended to control the wholesalers and retailers through forward integration and control of the product, today it is backward integration from the retailer which is changing the relationship in the supply chain.

The shift in relative power is apparent at three main levels. In terms of structural change, it can be seen in the changing relative size of manufacturers of consumer goods and retailers - rapid growth and mergers of national retail chains has resulted in the largest retailing conglomerates exceeding their suppliers in terms of size of sales, assets and stock-market capitalization. At the same time, the growing size and dominance of the major retailers has led to a reduction in the number of possible retail outlets for consumer goods, which, in turn, has been to the disadvantage of suppliers in terms of price and conditions of sale (the growth of preferential discounts for large multiples, etc). It has been noted, for example, that if neither of the U.K.'s top supermarket chains, Sainsbury and Tesco, takes a new product then the manufacturer may as well not bother marketing it (Randall, 1985 quoted in Ducatel & Blomley, 1990: 221).

Secondly, retailers have increasingly amassed control over a range of functions, including physical distribution, advertising, packaging, product design and product development. This increase in the scope of retailers' activities is most clearly indicated by the growth of retailers' 'own brand' products. According to Rubery et al. (1987: 135), the latter process has been the single most significant development in shifting the balance of supplier-retailer relations. The importance to retailers of selling under their own brand name is 'the power it gives them to influence not only the price, but also design and quality'. By securing a competitive advantage

over established suppliers, the retailers can then increase the pressure by widening the basis of supply both nationally and, increasingly, internationally.

Thirdly, in terms of of performance, the shift of relative power between retailers and suppliers has been reflected in the profitability growth of retailing enterprises during the 1980s relative to that achieved by consumer-goods manufacturers in the same period (Grant, 1987: 43).

Overall, the effects of increased retailer buying power upon the manufacturers of consumer goods has been to increase price-competition, to reduce profitability, to increase product differentiation (particularly through advertising and new product introductions), and to increase the pressure for cost-efficiency [3]. According to Rubery et al. (1987), the increased domination of the product market by large multiple retailers, and the increasing competition between retail enterprises, is a major cause of restructuring amongst consumer-goods manufacturers. Changes in product markets and the consequent need for increased responsiveness in terms of price, quality, variety and variability of batch size and goods supplied was a common experience amongst the consumer-goods producers they studied, and the single most important factor shaping their policies. Increasingly, therefore, retail capital is playing a determinate role in setting the agenda for manufacturing capital:

> large multiple retailers...were increasingly reducing the size of orders, requiring more frequent deliveries and placing more emphasis on quality and fashion in consumer demand. The product market changes exerted a downward pressure on prices and hence margins and required firms to supply smaller batches, with quicker deliveries, of a greater variety of goods and more frequent product changes (Rubery et al., 1987:33).

reducing circulation costs

Because the circulation costs incurred in retailing do not contribute to the creation of value, retailers attempt to maximise the speed up of all retail operations in order to increase the

turnover time of capital [4].

Overall, labour is the single largest cost to retailers - rising to 50% of gross margins (Segal - Horn, 1987). Given the labour intensive nature of most retailing work reducing labour costs is considered of paramount importance to remaining competitive. Historically, the realisation of this objective has involved the introduction of more productive selling techniques such as self-service shopping together with significant changes in workforce composition in an attempt to employ cheaper sources of labour (particularly women part-timers and young people).

Possibly *the* single most important factor in containing labour costs was the introduction of self-service shopping in the 1960s. This development had dramatic effects both on the number of sales staff required by the industry and upon the organization of the labour process - transforming the nature of much retail work from specialised personal self-service into two labour-intensive, repetitive and routine, low paid occupations: shelf-filling sales assistance and cash 'n' wrap till operation. Retailers could therefore recruit labour for occupations demanding little or no specialised knowledge and easily acquired skills [5].

At the same time, however, this development also effected a transformation in the relationship between customers and employees, as the former took on more of the 'work' of the latter. As the scope of customer choice and autonomy - the exercise of personal 'shopping skills' - was extended within the space of the retail establishment, that of the sales floor worker was consequently reduced: 'deskilling' for the shopworker became a form of 'enskilling' for the customer. In other words, self-service functioned as a 'technique of individuation' for consumers, constituting them as self-regulating, autonomous individual subjects exercising choice in a world of goods, and offering them more apparant involvement in, and control over, the act of purchase. Thus, retailers persuaded customers that self-service was in their own interests as individuals - offering them more involvement in and apparent control over the act of purchase - whilst simultaneously reaping the financial benefits of reduced labour costs and increased buying power over suppliers themselves.

This deskilling of the retail labour process facilitated, accentuated, and reinforced another key development - the growth of female part-time labour (Robinson & Wallace, 1974; Robinson, 1988). Whereas in 1961, only 28% of the retail workforce worked part-time, by 1984 this had risen to 54%, making retail the largest employer of part-time labour in the private

sector. This increase in the utilisation of part-time labour has occurred almost entirely at the expense of full-time employment - the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) level within the industry fell by over 35% during that same period - thus contributing to a reduction in retailer's wage costs and to increased flexibility [6]. Savings in the former arose from less rigid schedules of working hours, the widespread association of part-time jobs with relatively low hourly rates of pay and the general exclusion of part-time employees from eligibility for fringe benefits attached to full-time employment. At the same time, greater flexibility could be derived from the ability of retailers to match labour more readily with fluctuating daily and weekly trading levels (Robinson, 1988).

As Bamfield (1980: 36) has argued, when self-service replaced personal service as the dominant mode in the organization of shopping it permitted impressive gains to be made in productivity through the substitution of capital for labour and the transfer of functions to the customer. However, this shift turned out to be more than just a labour-saving device. The trading practice it produced led to the collapse of resale price maintainance and to the increased concentration and increased buying power of retailers.

A second strand in the reduction of circulation costs can be seen in the changing geography of store location. Here the move is towards increased centralisation of provision (as well as command), thus encouraging consumers to undertake more of the 'work' of consumption and exchange. Although this development has represented a considerable capital outlay for multiple retailers, bigger units have allowed them to address larger geographic markets as well as directly reducing circulation costs. This ongoing process of centralisation was facilitated in the 1980s by the rapid introduction of EDP technologies. The large multiples are now highly dependent on EDP technologies for the co-ordination of their geographically dispersed operations. However, because these innovations have very high initial costs and minimum efficient scale of operations, firms have therefore had to be large enough to ensure cost effective utilisation of the equipment.

The most visible sign of the new technology is at the checkout where Electronic Point of Sale (EPoS) tills and Electronic Funds at Point of Sale (EFTPoS) facilities are being introduced in ever-increasing numbers (Retail Week, 19/09/1990: 22) [7]. EPoS systems

provide retailers with an immediate record of each item sold at the point-of-sale thereby facilitating significant improvements in stock management, including faster and more accurate re-ordering and reduced stock-holding. Stock can now be automatically re-ordered from company warehouses or distribution depots or directly from manufacturers. At the same time, the detailed and immediately available sales data captured enables retailers to monitor the comparative sales of different products, brands, types of customers and areas, price-changes and promotions and generally to identify fast- or slow-moving product lines and to modify purchasing orders accordingly. Increasing the quantity and quality of information about the sales performance of lines in this way (and the competitive advantage and increased relative power this can bring) has been a primary aim of EPoS implementation in the U.K. (Smith, 1988: 151-152). As a former Corporate Marketing Director of the supermarket chain Asda has argued,

> The move towards scanning is absolutely at the core of understanding how a retailer is performing...The ability to collect accurate information about sales and profit by line and not only collect it but order it and use it effectively is going to be one of the ways that determines the winners and losers (Dowling, 1987)

Similarly, EFTPoS systems reduce circulation costs through speeding up the act of sale and cutting down the amount of paperwork (and staff needed to handle it) involved in ordinary credit card and cheque transactions and in the amount of cash handled (with its attendant security costs). They also help to provide more information on individual customers thus allowing for marketing experiments and targetted promotions. EDP technologies have also helped to transform the organization of the warehouse and distribution function. Alongside the installation of EPoS systems in-store, many retailers have invested heavily in the automation and centralisation of warehouse and distribution operations as a whole, contributing to the substitution of "just-in-time" for "just-in-case". This process of centralisation and automation has engendered large cost savings in transportation and storage expenses, for example.

As basic data-entry and data-processing are increasingly automated in stores and warehouses, costs at head office are also reduced. According to Noyelle (1987: 37) the process of technological change in large scale retail enterprises has resulted in much head office work becoming more analytic and investigative and less involved with basic data entry or processing. Progressively, these changes have shifted the balance of skills towards higher-skilled personnel.

EDP technology also allows greater management surveillance and control of the labour process [8]. Increasingly, EPoS technology is being used for labour monitoring and scheduling and for control of pilferage, allowing for a greater degree of management control over labour utilisation and cost. Given the 'stochastic' nature of customer arrivals and the different levels of demand at different times of the day, the information derived from EPoS can be deployed to ensure that staff are brought in and out of the trading week when 'customers require it', in a closer 'fit' between customer flow and staffing levels.

A recently introduced software package from the computer company ICL, for example, entitled 'Resource Manager' provides for just such a direct link between EPoS data and staffing levels. This package takes EPoS information at fifteen minutes intervals throughout the working day and matches this to a file of available staff to produce a labour schedule for the week ahead. In itself this is little different from other labour scheduling systems. However, the software can also be used as an on-line tool incorporating the latest sales data to produce budget and performance plans for local management purposes.

> If, for example, a store manager has set his staffing levels at the start of the week, but for some reason sales on fresh meat are a disaster and he is falling below target, the system alerts him to this fact and he can move staff, reduce overheads in that section and bring the department back into profit. Alternatively, if sales soar in a section he can see at a glance how much over-budget he is and increase the promotional spend, perhaps to encourage even further business. (Retail Week, 4/5/1990: 17).

Similarly, cost minimisation in the pursuit of profitability and flexibility in retail leads to segmentation via the utilisation of alternative labour types for 'discrete' (as opposed to 'continuous') periods. The introduction of EDP technologies in association with other innovations, such as longer trading hours and labour law loopholes (National Insurance legislation allows for the differential treatment of groups according to the numbers of hours worked), have assisted, but are not the primary cause of, the increasing utilisation of labour by retailers on a less than full-time basis. The highly competitive nature of the contemporary retail trade as well as the characteristic features of retailing activity mentioned above (erratic product demand, for example) make the trade open to a particularly marked dualism in the methods of labour utilisation (Noyelle, 1987; Craig & Wilkinson, 1985; Robinson &Wallace, 1974; Pond, 1977). Increasingly, therefore, retailers are purchasing labour, much as they purchase goods from manufacturers, on a "just-in-time" basis. Complementing these changes in the structure of employment in the retail sector were associated changes in the relations of employment. As Bluestone and Huff Stevenson (1981:44) have argued, the search for labour flexibility in retailing has involved the dissolution of 'long-term employment relations' and the growth in its place of part-time and temporary labour contracts. The decline of the internal labour market and the growing duality of employment within the retailing industry has had a deletrious effect upon the conditions of employment of those caught in, or relegated to, the secondary segments of the retail labour market [9]. As a consequence of this shift, a large majority of those employed within retail find themselves in jobs demanding limited skills, offering few opportunities for on-the-job training, and extremely limited opportunities for upward mobility. At the same time as those in the 'core' segments of this market have tended to experience some degree of 'upskilling', those in the secondary segments have been subject to a process of 'down waging' (Noyelle, 1987).

As in other industries, the transformation of employment in retailing in the late 1960s and early 1970s led to an almost total break in the link between sales floor positions and managerial positions. This means that the burden of finding mobility opportunities now rests very much on the shoulders of secondary workers themselves, and no longer on employers. The decrease in firm-specific employment opportunities has placed more workers in competition with one

another, thus making it easier for employers to keep wage rates low.

The impact of decreased employer commitment towards, and increased surveillance over, the retail sales labour force is registered in the growing staff turnover rates in the industry. In their research into the department store industry in the U.S., Bluestone & Huff Stevenson (1981) found that the turnover of sales floor employees had increased steadily throughout the post-war period. Annual gross turnover rates grew from the 36% to 41% range in the late 1950s, to the 41%to 45% range in the mid-1960s and to the 47% to 51% range in the early 1970s. The story is similar in the U.K., with average turnover rates in some businesses running at 50% or more by the mid-1980s (Gardner & Sheppard, 1989, Lane, 1989).

As I have indicated, the reorganisation of staffing in sales occupations since the early 1960s has been oriented towards maximising sales output per employee while reducing labour costs. As a result of this process most major high street multiples have tended to cluster around a Taylorian mode of organising employment. In other words, they have tended to practice an intense division of labour, a pronounced centralisation of command, surveillance and control, and have reduced significantly the degree of discretion exercised by shopfloor personnel and by store managers as well. The regulation of shopfloor workers has taken a number of forms mostly involving direct supervision, combined with bureaucratic control techniques and more 'anonymous' panoptical surveillance technologies (the labour monitoring facilities of EPoS, for example). All these techniques are indicative of what Alan Fox (1974) termed 'low trust' employment relations.

For retailers the development of 'retail engineering' in the pursuit of competitive advantage - through concentration, centralisation and cost reduction, in conjunction with the deployment of EDP technologies - has been associated with employment policies that facilitate and enhance the 'low trust' direction and surveillance of flexible, easily substitutable sales-floor labour. The detrimental effects that these policies have had in terms of labour turnover, commitment and motivation have not been of much concern to retail employers, on the whole. By concentrating so markedly on labour utilisation rather than its effectiveness (Distributive Trades Economic Development Committee, 1976), retailers have shown little interest in whether or not the employee identified with the aims and objectives of her or his employing organization.

Rather, they have been concerned with fostering a greater sense of identification and 'loyalty' between customers and their own particular retail 'offering'.

In the following section I suggest that, as the battle for market share within the retail industry is increasingly articulated as a struggle for the imagination of the consumer, so labour effectiveness is now coming to be seen as a major source of competitive advantage by a growing number of retailers. In other words, new attempts by retailers to 'make up' the consumer also have repercussions for the ways in which the work-based subject of retail is produced and regulated.

Retail: from 'numbers' to 'souls'

Until the late 1970s and early 1980s, most multiple retailers continued to pursue merchandising policies aimed at what they perceived to be a homogeneous market. The emphasis was on building sales by continuous cost and price reductions: the 'pile it high, sell it cheap' philosophy of mass merchandising. However, as concentration within the industry increased, the scope for competition on price alone was consequently reduced. Aggressive competition on price in the late 1970s produced price wars and, in the context of high inflationary times, led to decreasing profit margins in both food and non-food trade (Bamfield, 1988; Davies & Howard, 1988). However, when inflation did begin to fall in the early 1980s, and disposable income grew amongst those lucky enough to be in paid employment, multiple retailers were faced with another problem. The higher income groups benefiting most from the Thatcherite 'turn' were 'trading up', making more specialized demands on retail markets. The mass merchandisers found themselves in trouble as demand swung in favour of the specialist retailer (Segal-Horn, 1987).

In order to stay competitive in this environment, retailers began to seek ways both of differentiating themselves from one another on terms other than price, and of moving upmarket in order to appeal to those consumers with high levels of disposable income. The policies they pursued to this end encouraged the transformation of retail from dull distributive cypher to culture industry. The battle for market share was rearticulated, first and foremost, as a struggle for the imagination of the consumer. 'Getting it right' economically meant getting it right

culturally - offering a carefully co-ordinated 'unique' image, identity and atmosphere to diligently targetted 'lifestyle' consumer groupings. From thinking of customers 'only in terms of numbers', retailers now began to calculate 'in terms of the soul' (Fitch & Woudhuysen, 1987). The successful expansion of the retail industry was to be 'customer led', achieved through interventions aimed at the subjectivity of the consumer. Hence the increased importance of the symbolic expertise of marketing, design and advertising, underpinned by the knowledges and techniques of subjectivity, to recent developments within the retail sector.

symbolic expertise in the service of retail

The disciplines of marketing, design and advertising have played a major role in retailers' attempts to differentiate themselves from one another and to 'move upmarket'. As I indicated earlier, their foremost contribution to developments within the sector in the last decade has been through the discourse of 'lifestyling' - the combination of design and visual communication with techniques of market segmentation.

Through an assemblage of socio-economic classification, (geo)demographics and, perhaps most importantly, 'psychographic' attitudinal and perceptual research, marketing experts group consumers into discrete 'aspirational clusters' that go on to form the basis of retailers' target market segments, or 'niches'. As Dick Hebdige has indicated intensive forms of contemporary 'lifestyle' research are designed to offer a 'social map of desire'. They have been developed quite deliberately to cut across traditional socio-economic polarities and to constitute in their place a new version/vision of 'the social':

> They depend for their success on the accurate outlining and anticipation (through observation and interviews with 'target' subjects) not just of what some people think they want but of what they'd like to be (Hebdige, 1989: 53).

A retailer's 'market position' is its response to the map of desire of its target customer segment. The production of a market position 'requires a co-ordinated "statement" to be made

by merchandise selection, trading format, customer services and customer communications. The more closely the customer can identify with the "offer" presented, the more "comfortable" the customer will be, and he (*sic*) will respond in terms of shopping frequency, size of spend per visit and the proportion of total spend allocated to the favoured store and its competitors' (Knee and Walters, 1985: 16).

If, in the lifestyling process, the expertise of marketing and market research is primarily responsible for delineating and monitoring the maps of desire of targetted consumer groups, that of design and visual communication is responsible for creating a 'total image or look' for the retailer which will articulate these desires and translate them into sales. As the directors of one of Britain's leading design company's, Fitch RS, have written:

> Design is about capturing the consumer's imagination. Through this, the consumer's time and his (*sic*) disposable income is captured. Design thus deals in the issues which come closest to a human beings personal reality. Designing is about needs and desires, about social circumstances; it is about touching people in the heart as well as in their pockets...The challenge, then, is for retailers to *use* design not as a cosmetic, but to understand the individual within the community or the catchment area and to provide for his or her behavioural, aspirational and lifestyle needs...Design is a way of communicating: design is sensory - people can touch it, feel it experience it...In other words, design talks to people. This is the ultimate strategic significance of design to modern retailing (Fitch & Woudhuysen, 1987).

For Fitch & Woudhuysen, retailers are in the game of theatre, 'or they are nothing'. For them, design is a central component in the transformation of retail into Britain's premier 'pleasure' industry [10]. The design function is not limited to interiors, signage and store planning, however, it also plays a key role in many aspects of the supply chain including graphics, packaging, corporate identity planning and branding. Increasingly, retail design teams are linking up with suppliers to develop ranges which meet the retailer's overall 'offering' and 'statement' (Sabel, 1990; Segal-Horn, 1987). Again the emphasis is on

presenting a 'totally consistent image' in order to win over the target consumer group.

Advertising also plays a crucial role in promoting this aim. Indeed, the changing form and content of retail advertising is indicative of the 'cultural logic' driving developments within the industry. Retailers have traditionally been significant advertisers in the marketplace. By 1989, for example, nine out of the top twenty advertised brands were those of retailing organizations (Retail Week, 13/07/1990). As a recent report in the advertising industry trade paper Campaign (03/05/1991:4) announced, 'the top spending brands in Thatcher's Britain were always the retailers'.

Whereas in the 1970s retail advertising focused almost exclusively on mass market pricing, the 1980s saw a pronounced shift towards 'lifestyle' advertising. Associated with this change was a greater utilisation of televisual media by retailers, 'with its impeccable "image-building" credentials', rather than a wholesale reliance on local and national black and white press advertising (Retail Week, 13/07/1990). According to industry commentators, retailers have become aware

> that a market position based solely on price advantage can be difficult to maintain, and will not necessarily insulate them against innovation and increased competition in the marketplace. This has led to a distinction in retail advertising between "product/price" and "image/added value". Essentially this involves selling the store as well as what is in the store (Retail Week, 13/07/1990).

As more retailers have moved towards the latter option they have also become increasingly interested in television, for 'the selective use of television can enhance a retailer's ability to differentiate his (*sic*) offering in an increasingly competitive market' (Retail Week, 13/07/1990).

Two recent television campaigns illustrate traditional 'pile it high, sell it cheap' mass merchandisers taking the "image/added value" approach in order to attract more affluent consumers. Woolworths has been regenerating its children's clothes range with the aid of a series of 'junior lifestyle' adverts focussing on the upmarket 'Ladybird' brand. Meanwhile

Tesco has attempted to highlight its 'exclusivity'and its 'quality' and 'green' credentials in a series of adverts centred around Dudley Moore's Euro-odyssey in search of an elusive free-range chicken. 'Desperate to distance itself from its "pile it high, sell it cheap" past, Tesco's doubled spend to emerge as 1990's biggest spending brand' (Campaign, 03/05/1991: 4).

These latter examples indicate that bids by retailers to differentiate themselves from their competitors are simultaneously attempts to appeal to more affluent consumers. Indeed, while the expertise of lifestyling constructs many different consumer clusters, these groupings are not accorded equal weight. It is those enjoying relatively high levels of disposable income and exhibiting a particular relation to self that tend to be most frequently represented in lifestyle advertising, for example. Rather than being distinct, differentiated categories of consumer, the subjects of 'lifestyle' often tend towards a composite 'ideal' consumer. As I indicated earlier, the desires, attitudes and attributes accorded to this universalistic creation are remarkably similar to those associated with the competitive individual subject of neo-liberal political ideology.

The expertise of marketing, design and image construction, underpinned by the knowledges and techniques of subjectivity, constitute consumers as individual actors seeking to maximise the worth of their existence to themselves by assembling a lifestyle (or lifestyles) through personalised acts of choice in a world of goods and services. Each commodity is imbued with a personal meaning, 'a glow cast back upon those who purchase it, illuminating the kind of person they are, or want to become' (Rose, 1990:19). For these 'ideal' consumers therefore shopping is an integral component of their 'life project', of their 'investment orientation to life' (Featherstone, 1990). For them shopping is not a troublesome chore but a pleasurable experience and pre-eminent skill.

Of central import here is the view of self attributed to these ideal consumers. They are 'consuming' or 'enterprising' subjects who make a project of their lives: they calculate about themselves and work upon themselves in order to better themselves (Rose, 1989). They seek to 'maximise and experience the range of sensations available' and are fascinated with 'identity, presentation and appearance' (Featherstone, 1990:91). 'Today's consumers' want 'self expression and self-fulfilment' and 'demand greater choice and specialisation' (Walters & Knee, 1985:11). They cry: "Don't regiment me. Don't institutionalise me. Treat me as an

individual...Today's consumers take a more qualitative, more judgemental, more egocentric view than once they did' (Fitch & Woudhuysen, 1987). 'We are more leisured, more middle class, more demanding...and we want to keep away from, as well as up with, the Jones's, we want to be individuals' (Haddon, 1987).

As articulated by the expertise of symbolic mediation, it is this dynamic, narcissistic view of self as project, as object to be continually worked on and improved, which underpins contemporary 'change' programmes in the retail sector. Expertise translates the 'consumer's search for expression and identity' into specific retail demands: for 'greater choice', 'better quality', for a more personalised, pleasurable, shopping environment and experience. In turn, these demands are transmuted into specific programmes of intervention and rectification by retailers: 'customer care' programmes; shop refurbishments; expanded product ranges; 'quality initiatives' and the like.

'close to the customer': retail's 'constitutive outside'

If, as the experts of symbolic mediation argue, consumers will only ally themselves with retail 'offers' to the extent that they construe them as enhancing their own skills of self-realisation, self-presentation and self-direction, then the success of retail enterprise depends increasingly upon its ability to stay 'close to the customer' (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

However, staying 'close to the customer' is more than a matter of logistics: 'in the battle to capture consumers spending it is becoming increasingly vital to capture their hearts and minds as well. And the only way to achieve this task is with vastly improved customer service' (Retail Week, 30/11/1990). In other words, labour effectiveness, the quality of personal service provided by sales floor assistants, is an increasingly vital component of the 'value added' approach to achieving competitive advantage. According to industry consultants, however, the provision of quality service

> can only come from employees who are committed to giving it. It cannot be ordered or forced on them. There are myriad 'moments of truth' in the chain of contact between the consumer and company. Management cannot stand behind

> people every second of the day to check that they are making the most of these moments of truth. Service can only be rendered in an efficient, cheerful and high quality way by people who feel the customer is important and are committed to doing their best (Martin & Nicholls, 1987:81)

Thus, staying 'close to the customer' also means gaining 'productivity through people', 'treating the rank and file as the root source of quality and productivity gain' (Peters & Waterman, 1982: 14). In order to win the 'hearts and minds' of consumers, retailers must now also 'win over' their frontline employees. An editorial in the trade journal *Retail Week* (6/7/1990) devoted to the subject of 'service' argues that 'even the most relevant plan for improving customer service issuing forth from head office will come to nothing unless those on the shopfloor are carried along with the spirit as well as the letter of any plan'. However, for retailers the pursuit of competitive advantage has long been associated with 'low trust' employment relations. As I indicated earlier, retail employers have practiced an intense division of labour, a pronounced centralisation of command, surveillance and control and have significantly reduced the degree of discretion exercised by shopfloor personal. Overall, the emphasis has been on the close direction and surveillance of flexible, easily substitutable sales floor labour with little attention being paid to the detrimental effects that these policies have had in terms of labour turnover, motivation and commitment.

The paradox of 'lifestyle' marketing is that it is now this very commitment and motivation which is required from staff in order to ensure the delivery of 'quality service'. An employment policy, which focuses on labour utilisation to the detriment of labour effectiveness, is no longer seen to be consistent with the aims and objectives of 'staying close to the customer' and eliciting 'productivity through people'. Thus retail management is faced with the classic dilemma between the need to exercise control over the workforce while at the same time requiring its enthusiastic commitment to corporate objectives. As Hyman (1987: 41) has argued, the close direction, surveillance and discipline of labour is more likely to destroy, rather than guarantee, the mobilisation of discretion and diligence amongst the workforce. The emerging tensions between employment relations based on 'low trust' substitutability of labour

and the importance of 'service' in a customer-led retail 'strategy' are evident in Thierry Noyelle's (1987:47) analysis of the U.S. retailer R.H. Macy & Co.

> The reorganization of staffing in sales after the mid-1960s was oriented towards maximising sales output per employee while containing labor costs. But the emphasis on limited sales force attachment to the company has tended to run counter to the level of employee involvement needed to maintain high standards of work quality. Quality needs to be restored if productivity is to rise again. This parallels the company's need both for re-emphasising service as a part of its upscaling strategy and for adding qualified sales personnel because the trend toward multiplication of product classifications has rendered the sales task a more demanding one than in the past.

If the 'emotional labour' of customer service cannot be fully secured or effectively guaranteed through a system of close supervision and formal rules, then other systems which 'attempt to minimize the potential area of error in the exercise of discretion' have to be brought to bear (Townley, 1989; Hochschild, 1983). This suggests a shift in emphasis away from formal direction as to how work *must be done* to 'implicit' expectations as to how work *should be done*; in other words towards a system of indirect normative regulation, of 'government at a distance' (Miller & Rose, 1990).

When regulation takes place through close supervision and technical rules 'it is hardly a problem should the worker posess a distinct cultural identity'. However, once regulation is through 'the worker's "normative orientations", the necessary control in work will depend on the removal of any basic cultural differences between him and his superiors (*sic*) (Wickham, 1976: 9-10, quoted in Townley, 1989: 106)'. In other words, normative regulation rests upon an identification between the individual employee and the goals and objectives of his or her employing organization. Employees 'must become aware of their central role in adding value to products and service through quality labor and to be able automatically, as if by second nature, to balance competing demands for highly individualized quality service and bottom line financial considerations' (Fuller & Smith, 1991: 13). Here the onus on direct control is

transformed into an emphasis on 'culturally' produced *self*-control. Thus, the government of the retail enterprise now comes to operate through the 'soul' of the individual employee (Foucault, 1988). In other words, 'staying close to the customer' and gaining 'productivity through people' require the social relations of employment within the retail industry to be re-imagined, the internal world of the retail enterprise to be re-conceptualised. Exactly how this transformation is effected forms the focus of the following chapter.

concluding remarks

During the last decade retailing has played a major role in spearheading the progressive penetration of the market into all areas of British life, encouraging and facilitating the spread of consumer culture. In the process the relationship between what is thought of as properly 'economic' and what is thought of as properly 'cultural' has been tranformed. Today, shopping has emerged as Britain's foremost 'leisure pursuit', and an ever increasing proportion of the total number of goods produced are cultural goods, created to be, and purchased as, indicators of the individuality of taste and sense of style of the enterprising 'sovereign' consumer.

In contemporary British retailing there is no longer any room for the base/superstructure dichotomy. As the 'economic' folds seamlessly into the 'cultural', distinctions between 'production', consumption' and 'everyday' life become less clear cut. Retailing is increasingly a *discursive* activity - the location of 'mythical re-articulations and imaginary aggregations' (Laclau, 1990:82). However, it is not simply the relations between retailers and consumers that should be seen as 'matters of discourse', but also the relations between retail employers and their employees. In other words, the 'relations of employment' within the retail sector are becoming increasingly 'cultural' at the same time.

As the battle for market share within retailing is increasingly articulated as a struggle for the *imagination of the consumer*, the success of the retail enterprise becomes consequent upon the ability to 'win over', or more accurately 'make up' the consumer. The development of 'retail engineering' has allowed retailers to delineate and monitor consumer desires more intricately

than ever before and to expand significantly the range of 'mass produced individualities' on offer. However, 'staying close to the customer' is not just a matter of logistical engineering - of 'physical proximity' as one commentator has put it - but also of 'emotional proximity' (Retail Week, 31/08/1990:2).

In attempting to 'make up' the consumer, retailers are therefore driven to 'win over' those charged with providing on-site 'emotional proximity' (the quality 'emotional labour' of servicing work): retail employees. In a truly relational manner, interventions aimed at the subjectivity of the 'enterprising' consumer have repercussions for the ways in which the work-based subject of retail is produced and regulated. Staying 'close to the customer' isn't simply a matter of 'logistical engineering' since it also implies 'engineering the soul' of the retail employee, to ensure that he or she automatically delivers the highly individualised quality service 'demanded' by the enterprising consumer.

In the following two chapters I draw upon an empirical study of recent developments within British retailing to explore how people are 'made up' at work. In keeping with the framework I have adopted for studying the discursive construction of work-based subjectivity and identity, the first of these chapters corresponds to the vector of 'labelling from above', while the latter explores the 'actual behaviour of those so-labelled'.

Thus, in the next chapter I will attempt to delineate and examine the programmatic aspirations of senior management in a number of multiple retail enterprises and to articulate the various 'technologies' and practices through which these aspirations are operationalised and new ways for people to be at work created.

Notes

1. Retail is now one of the largest industries in the U.K. By 1984, over one third of national output came from retail sales and throughout the 1980s turnover in retailing shares on the stockmarket was one of the highest of all groups (Segal-Horn, 1987: 13).

2. The share of multiples in the U.K. grocery trade, for example, has risen from 42% in 1970 to 70% by 1985, while the independents have fallen from 43% to 18% over the same period (Mc Fadyen, 1987: 56). Moreover, by 1988 the top five food retailers alone accounted for 70% of the market (Gardner & Sheppard, 1989: 26).

3. Despite vociferous protestations from manufacturers about the deletrious effects of increased retailer power on the country's manufacturing base, the government (in the form of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and the Office of Fair Trade) recently ruled that growing retailer buying power does not pose a threat to consumer choice. Given the government's continued attachment to expanding the rights of the 'sovereign' consumer, and the 'culture of the customer', this judgement should come as no surprise (Grant, 1987: 44).

4. Because retailing consists of the following basic functions: stockholding; assembly and break-up of loads; transport; purchase and sale, the retailer is driven towards maximising the speed-up of these operations up through the point of final consumption (as well, of course, as increase in total consumption).

5. Shop-floor workers were not the only employees affected by these wide-ranging changes. The work of store management has also been subject to rationalisation. The degree of 'control' and 'discretion' exercised by managers over a wide range of activities and decisions at store level has been considerably reduced as the greater 'visibility' available to head office from the introduction of EDP technologies, for example, allows senior mangement to engage in increasingly 'systemic' surveillance of the whole retail process. Typically, establishment

managers in the multiple retailers have little or no say over the number of lines carried in-store, their selection, or their layout. They also have a significantly reduced input into decisions about promotions, pricing, window display, staff budgets, marketing, store design and decoration and delivery schedules. On the whole they are left with 'controlled' responsibility for sales maximisation and cost-control in-store (including facilitating the continuous flow of trading information to centralised departments), as well as responsibility for various people management functions, and the general 'atmosphere' and appearance of the store (Smith, 1988).

6. Despite the oft-voiced claims of the major retailers to be the key employment generators of the new service economy, there has been a long term decline in the total retail workforce since the early 1960s. As the processes of concentration, centralisation and rationalisation proceeded within the industry the numbers of people employed fell. With the large multiples controlling a bigger share of the market, a greater proportion of sales are concentrated in a smaller number of shops, employing fewer people. Between 1961 and 1986, for example, the number of people employed in retail dropped by 300,000. During the same period, however, sales per employee rose by 2505, on average, from £17,000 to £44, 500 (Sparkes, 1987; Gardner & Sheppard, 1989: 187).

7. While investment in EPoS technology in West Germany rose by 21% between 1989-1990, investment in the UK rose by more than 40% during the same period 'from a base nearly twice that of Germany' (Retail Week, 19/09/1990: 22).

8. It needs to be stressed that contrary to traditional labour process analysis (Braverman, 1974), the workforce control implications of EDP technology are not the main objectives of its introduction in the U.K.but rather a means, and frequently a by-product, of 'the search for flexibility and adaptability in labour costs by the matching of labour inputs to customer demand or output' (Walsh, 1988: 36). Similarly, in a study of retail work in the U.S.A. Bluestone and Huff Stevenson (1981:39) argued that deskilling in the trade was not a primary goal in and of-itself but was a by-product of other changes, in particular, cost-cutting.

9. The pattern that emerges within the trade is of, on the one hand, a "core" comprising a small group of mostly white men who exert a large degree of control over access to well-paid managerial and professional occupations, and, on the other, a quite finely differentiated "secondary" group which comprises both full-time and, increasingly, part-time and temporary, unskilled, low paid, (on the whole) non-unionised, mainly female workers (but also some groups of men, especially minorities and young men).

10. Similarly, Anita Roddick - founder of the 'lifestyle' chain, *Bodyshop* - describes shops as theatres where the shop floor is a stage on which both shop assistants and customers are acting, and where the look, the smell, the spaces and the backdrop, are all important ingredients of the shopping experience. For her, shops must be cultural venues, arenas of sociality, and not just sites where money and goods change hands.

chapter six

assisted self-service - 'making up people' in retailing. I: 'labelling from above'

Introduction

In the previous chapter I argued that the struggle for market share within contemporary British retailing is increasingly articulated as a battle for the imagination and loyalty of the 'enterprising' consumer. In attempting to stay 'close to the customer' - to achieve an organic 'emotional' and 'physical' proximity - retailers are simultaneously making up 'new ways for people to be both 'inside' and 'outside' the workplace. Interventions aimed at, and constituting, the subjectivity of the 'enterprising' consumer have repercussions for the ways in which the work-based subject of retailing is produced and regulated.

In the following two chapters I draw upon my own empirical study of recent developments within the British retail industry to examine how people are 'made up' at work in contemporary retailing. In keeping with the framework I have outlined for analysing the discursive construction of work-based subjectivity and identity, the first of these chapters corresponds to the vector of 'labelling from above', while the latter explores the 'actual behaviour of those so-labelled'.

In this chapter, I will be concentrating upon the first of these two vectors, by delineating and examining the programmatic aspirations of senior management in a number of multiple retail enterprises and by articulating the various 'technologies of government' and ideological practices through which these aspirations are 'operationalised'. I argue that the internal world of the retail enterprise is being re-imagined through the managerial discourse of 'Excellence', as a place where productivity is to be enhanced, customers' needs satisfied, quality service guaranteed, 'flexibility' enhanced and creative innovation fostered through the active engagement of the 'self-actualising' impulses of all the organization's members. I suggest that store managers and shop-floor employees within retailing are being re-conceptualised as 'Enterprising' subjects: self-regulating, productive individuals whose sense of self-worth and virtue is inextricably linked to the 'Excellent' performance of their work,and, thus, to the success of the company employing them.

However, I begin by briefly re-examining what it means to govern in an 'Enterprising' or 'Excellent' manner.

'governing in an enterprising manner': a reprise

As I indicated in chapter three, 'government' is a form of power aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons. All forms of 'government' are discursive in character in that they rely upon the development of a language for delineating and depicting a certain domain that claims both to capture the 'reality' represented and literally to re-present it in a form suitable for deliberation, argumentation and intervention. However, because 'government' doesn't simply involve the ordering of processes and activities but is intimately concerned with subjectification, different 'governmental rationalities' - attempts to invent and exercise various types of rule - are closely related to conceptions of the nature and attributes of those to be governed. In other words, particular rationalities of government involve the construction of certain ways for people to be. They actively 'make up' people.

In chapter three, I suggested that the contemporary political discourse of neo-liberalism and the managerial discourse of 'Excellence' share a certain rationality of government, that of 'Enterprise'. Within these discourses, a certain idea of the enterprise of government promotes and sustains a particular conception of individuality as an enterprise, of the individual person as 'an entrepreneur of the self' (Gordon, 1987). The rationality of 'Enterprise' not only envisages the reconstruction of a variety of institutions and practices along the lines of the commercial business organization, but also redefines the sort of relationship an individual should have with him/herself, and the 'habits of action' he or she should acquire and exhibit. In this latter sense, 'Enterprise' refers to a plethora of ethical 'rules of conduct' for everyday existence: initiative, energy, boldness, self-reliance, self-maximisation and personal responsibility. In other words, 'Enterprise' makes up ways for people to be.

The subject of 'Enterprise' is the 'enterprising self'; a self that calculates about itself and that continually works upon itself in order to maximise its own sense of value and meaning. Enterpise thereby designates a form of rule that is both intrinsically ethical in Foucault's sense of that term - it delineates the kind of relationship a person shoud have with him/herself - and inherently economic - individual self-government is not only ethicallly 'good' it is also 'cheap'.

As I indicated in chapter three, the rationality of 'Enterprise' involves something of a double manoeuvre: on the one hand, the model of the market-oriented business organization is represented as the most virtuous, efficient and effective form of the institutional organization of goods and services. On the other, it is acknowledged that private enterprises are not inherently enterprising. Therefore, in order to maximise the benefits of the intrinsically virtuous free-market system, all commercial organizations and their members must continually be engaged in the struggle to become ever more enterprising. Thus, enterprising qualities - boldness, self-reliance, flexibility, vigour etc - are allocated an instrumental value in relation to the optimal performance of a 'free market economy'. Those organizations and individuals incessantly striving for 'Excellence' are therefore represented as the real 'champions' and role models of an 'Enterprise Culture', contributing to their own good, and as a result, the good of all.

Governing the business organization in an enterprising manner therefore involves the production of certain sorts of work-based subject. According to the Confederation of British Industry, for example, 'Excellent firms' are those which increasingly turn

> to the people who work for them to develop that competitive advantage. The winners are those who can organise and motivate their people at all levels so that they give willingly their ideas, their initiative and their commitment to the continuous improvement that winning requires...And it is up to those people as individuals to make the difference. They can no longer be treated as part of the collective mass...people want to do a good job, to have opportunities for self-development, to contribute their thoughts as well as their physical skills to the teams and firms for which they work, and to be recognised and rewarded for their whole contribution. (CBI, 1988:5)

In other words, governing the business organization in an enterprising manner is seen to necessitate the cultivation of enterprising subjects - autonomous, self-regulating, productive, responsible individuals. Enterprising firms are said to get the most out of their employees by harnessing 'the psychological striving of individuals for autonomy and creativity and

channelling them into the search of the firm for excellence and success' (Miller & Rose, 1990). They are represented as 'making meaning for people' through encouraging them to believe they have control over their own lives; that no matter what position they hold in an organization their contribution is vital, not only to the success of the company, but also to the enterprise of their own lives. Peters & Waterman (1982: 76 & 81), for example, approvingly quote Nietzche's axiom that 'he who has a *why* to live for can bear almost any *how*'. They argue that 'the fact ...that we *think* we have a bit more discretion leads to much greater commitment'. The enterprising corporation is therefore represented an an institution engaging in *controlled de-control.* To govern the corporation in an enterprising fashion is to 'to totalize' and 'individualize' at one and the same time (Foucault, 1988); or, to deploy Peters & Waterman's (1982: 318) terminology, to be 'simultaneously loose and tight' - 'organizations that live by the loose/tight principle are on the one hand rigidly controlled, yet at the same time allow (even insist on) autonomy, entrepreneurship, and innovation from the rank and file'.

The key to 'loose/tight' is 'culture'. According to Peters & Waterman the effective management of meanings, beliefs and values can transform an apparent contradiction - between increasing central control while extending individual autonomy and responsibility - into 'no contradiction at all'. If an organization has an appropriate 'culture' of Enterprise - if all its members adopt a characteristically 'enterprising' relationship to self - then efficiency, economy, autonomy, quality and innovation all 'become words that belong on the same side of the coin' (Peters & Waterman, 1982: 321). Thus, within the discourse of 'Excellence' the relations between 'production' and 'consumption', between the 'inside' and 'outside' of the corporation are progressively blurred.

> cost and efficiency, over the long run, follow on from the emphasis on quality, service, innovativeness, result-sharing, participation, excitement and an external problem-solving focus that is tailored to the customer...Quite simply these companies are simultaneously externally focused and internally focused - externally in that they are driven by the desire to provide service, quality and innovative problem-solving in support of their customers, internally in that quality control, for example, is put on the back of the individual line worker, not primarily in the lap of

> the quality control department. Service standards are likewise largely self-monitored...This constitutes the crucial internal focus: the focus on people...By offering meaning as well as money, they give their employees a mission as well as a sense of feeling great. Every man becomes a pioneer, an experimentor, a leader. The institution provides the guiding belief and creates a sense of excitement, a sense of being part of the best (Peters & Waterman, 1982: 321-323).

As I indicated at the end of the previous chapter, the activity of retailing in Britain has been re-conceptualized and redefined over the last few years. Increasingly, the battle for 'competitive advantage' in the retail industry is articulated in terms of 'staying close to the customer' and obtaining 'productivity through people'. According to a number of commentators (Ogbonna & Wilkinson, 1988; 1990; Marchington & Parker, 1990) the prevalence of the language of 'Excellence' within the industry has significant implications for the conduct of retailing and, in particular, for 'the quality of service provided and, therefore, the recruitment and training of staff employed' (Marchington & Parker, 1990: 157). In other words, the new images and mechanisms operative within contemporary retailing - those of 'emotional proximity', 'customer care', 'personal service' etc - appear to constitute and reflect the emergence of a new rationality of government. In the rest of this chapter, I draw upon empirical evidence from a range of retailing organizations in the U.K. to explore the ways in which changes in the government of the retail enterprise create new ways for people 'to be' at work.

the cult[ure] of the customer in retailing

Although British retailing is highly concentrated - being increasingly controlled and dominated by a few large companies - it is not particularly homogeneous and can be disaggregated into a number of broad varieties of business. Given the obvious positional differences between a supermarket chain such as Asda, and a department store like Harrods, for example, it may seem ridiculous to suggest that they share a similar rationality of government. Yet the language deployed by senior management in both organizations to

describe their aspirations, and the techniques and practices through which they intend to achieve them, are analogous. The importance attributed by both to 'strategic thinking', 'customer service', 'cultural change', 'excellence', 'quality' and 'ownership' indicates a similar approach to the conduct of retailing.

At Harrods, for example, a stated 'commitment to excellence' in customer service, as part of a 'wider strategic change programme', led, in 1989, to their Personnel Director visiting the Disney Corporation in the USA - one of Peters & Waterman's (1982) 'Excellent' companies - in order to explore the possibility of transposing certain elements of their 'service through people' theme to the Knightsbridge store [1]. On his return senior management were informed that the 'language' of Disney was absolutely right for Harrods. 'There are big similarities between Orlando and Knightsbridge', it was argued, 'like Disney, Harrods is really theatre'. It was important, the Personnel Director felt, for staff to realise they were part of an 'amazing' and 'spectacular' show, a living piece of British history, and that they were engaged in producing that show for their 'guests', the customers, every minute of every trading day. It was therefore essential for the company to recruit the right sort of staff, people who would internalize the 'Harrods culture',who could 'believe in it and become part of its history and prestige'; people that would learn to feel 'ownership'. Through Disneyfication, Harrods and its "family" of employees would therefore become more cohesive, productive, efficient and effective. In other words, through striving for excellence in customer service Harrods, as a business, and its employees, as individuals, would become more enterprising [2].

At Asda, on the other hand, while the emotional aspirations are more modest, the customer orientation is equally as strong.

> We are in the business of satisfying people with things that they want to buy, we are not in the business of major excitement. Yes, its very good to get interest in the stores and we are very mindful of creating a sympathetic environment...Yes, they want to be stimulated and interested but its not the same experience as shopping in the high street for fashion goods. It doesn't mean to say that we go back to pile it high, sell it cheap, it means that you have to understand the frame of mind that the consumers are in when they visit the

store...That means that we have to have an organisation structure which enables us to understand what it is that makes consumers tick, what it is so that we can organise our business accordingly...Customer service is now right up front at the store, is very important, and will be a differentiating factor increasingly. We are looking very hard at the ways in which we can be innovative in delivering better services to the customers...The culture of service is the interesting thing...not recruiting whoever you can find and then trying to craft customer sensitivity and customer care onto them through training. One of the first things of all is to screen at the recruitment stage those people who are predisposed to serve [3].

According to former Corporate Marketing Director at Asda, an emphasis on customer service is a crucial constitutive element of the company's move away from a 'pile it high, sell it cheap' philosophy towards a 'regenerated personality' based on quality: 'Quality has got to be paramount. People want more than range now, they want...good service. Expertise and quality credentials are much more important than talking about range or price' [4]. However, in attempting to 'put together an offer to match all our customers' needs', Asda is simultaneously making new demands upon their shop-floor employees. Thus 'the culture of service' that senior management envisage demands a new sort of work-based subject, a person 'predisposed to serve' in a manner appropriate to the reconceptualised 'personality' of Asda: to offer a highly individualised quality service to all Asda customers thus making them feel wanted and ensuring their loyalty. The move to a 'culture of service' therefore requires paying more attention to the recruitment and training of employees as *individuals* and to their effective enculturation into the corporate values and beliefs of Asda. Again the perceived 'Excellence' of Disney as a provider of 'service through people' is also utilised as a guide to action at Asda.

Disney corporation recruit and interview people in threes to see how they inter-relate one with the other, which is quite interesting. Then they spend a minimum of six weeks being trained in the business and then if they are good

enough they are promoted to work on the check-out line, which is quite an interesting comparison. They even fired a girl the previous week because she was too introverted. She wasn't dishonest or inefficient, she just didn't get the requisite eye-contacts. It wasn't just about 'have a nice day', it was actually about making customers feel wanted. You walk around the average UK store and see assistants avoiding eye contact. I don't think we will necessarily be the same as the States in years to come but most certainly making people feel wanted in the store is going to be important [5].

That retailers as different as Harrods and Asda can be seen to share a similar language for delineating and depicting the retail domain - to share a governmental rationality - is indicative of the power and pervasiveness of the language in question. For both companies it is through the rationality of Enterprise that the conduct of retailing is being re-imagined and reconstructed.

'Enterprise' can be seen to provide senior management in retail with a language which constitutes the problems of the retail domain and of the individual retail enterprise in such a way as to simultaneously offer itself as a solution to the problems it 'uncovers' and delineates. So the imperative to 'know thy customer' and 'learn from those whom you serve' constitutes the retail organization in a particular way, and consequently makes up new ways for people to be both in and out of work. At the high street multiple C&A, for example, the basic retail philosophy has remained roughly the same for the last fifty years - 'fashions for the masses, and something for everyone in our store'. In recent years, however, this philosophy has given way to an appeal to specific product target groups. In the process C&A itself has been reconstituted as a series of separate 'brands' targetting different groups but housed under the corporate rubric of the C&A organization. This shift is reflected in C&A's corporate advertising policy. Instead of having general advertisements appealing to everyone the C&A brands now advertise individually to reinforce the proposition that 'we are appealing to you' as an individual consumer. In turn this manoeuvre has had implications for the recruitment and training of staff. Rather than providing an undifferentiated level of service the emphasis has shifted to a more individualised mode of service delivery: different levels of service and 'types' of servicer reflecting the differing 'personalities' of the various brands (White, 1987).

As 'customer satisfaction' becomes the benchmark by which retail success is judged, knowledge of the customer becomes increasingly crucial to competitive advantage. Those retail organizations ajudged to be 'close to the customer', through assiduously tracking the market and responding, quickly and in a highly co-ordinated fashion to emerging consumer trends, are heralded as the 'retail engineers' - representatives of 'best practice' and guides to action - by 'key' retailing 'opinion makers' such as industry consultants, the financial media and, most importantly, City analysts [6].

'Retail engineers' are those companies deemed to be operating 'strategically', obtaining 'face-to-back visibility' throughout the production/distribution/retail chain. Put simply, 'retail engineers' are those companies judged to be 'in control' ; running their businesses in a 'market driven' manner and hence worthy of the approbation of the money markets. As one leading City retail analyst argued recently

> Over time, markets reward quality, consistency and visibility...what is encouraging is that the companies that have risen in the stores sector have been the retail engineers. Retail engineers are companies like Boots and WH Smith who have been really working the potential to use EPoS, direct product profitability techniques (DPP) and the whole gamut of systems and information technology to improve stock turnover, gross margins and sales. Retail engineering rules OK. [7]

Similarly, at City firm Bain & Co. analysts view 'strategy' as essential to success in retailing: 'in the retailing business, in particular, our experience has led us to a strong conviction that the principal determinants of success or failure lie in the quality of strategic thinking behind issues traditionally thought of as operating management' [8].

Developing a coherent and consistent 'strategy' - becoming a 'retail engineer' - is represented as an essential component of business success both in terms of guaranteeing customer satisfaction and meeting City expectations of financial performance. At one and the same time, however, being 'strategic' is also 'ethical', in Foucault's (1984) sense of that term -

it is indicative of good government, of governing in an 'enterprising' manner.

"doing the right things right": 'strategy' in retailing

The power of this discourse is reflected in the alacrity with which the language of strategy has been taken up by retailers. Across the industry, from book sellers to supermarket chains, high street multiples have begun to deploy the discourse of strategy in earnest (Johnson, 1987; Marchington & Parker, 1990; Ogbonna & Wilkinson, 1988; Knee & Walters, 1985).

At company **A**, (a multiple mixed retailer) for example, the discourse of 'strategic management' began to be deployed by senior executives in the mid-eighties. At that time the company was coming in for considerable criticism from the City and the financial media with regard to a series of poor financial performances. As a director of the company expressed it

> in the mid 1980s', **A** was being criticized as a company that was pretty flat in terms of its performance. It was a mature chain and it wasn't going anywhere, and therefore the prognosis was not very good. You know, flat profits over a number of years. And that rattled us; we weren't very happy about that. We didn't consider ourselves as flat and boring but clearly the City, in particular, did: "**A** is looking lost", "**A** doesn't know where its going", "**A** doesn't know what sort of store it is any more, **A**'s lost its way". Those were the sorts of things being flung at us [9].

Although senior management responded quickly to try and reverse these perceptions of the company, retrospectively - through the 'always already' strategic gaze - they considered their initial response to have been 'symptomatic rather than strategic'. Only once they 'sat down and formulated a proper business strategy deliberately written out in customer terms' - their Secure Shopping Strategy (SSS -*my synonym deployed to respect confidentiality*) - did they feel able to begin to 'turn the company round in the eyes of the City'.

Similarly, at company **B** (a young womenswear division of clothing-to-department-store, retailing group **X**) the language of strategy is a recent development. In this case, developing a

strategy was a response to (and, in turn, constitutive of) projected changes in the company's target market. At the same time, the Managing Director of the company stressed that the strategy was developed explicitly for the attention of the Board of Directors of its parent company. 'Getting strategic' was a way of projecting an aura of being 'in control' and of being 'enterprising' to the 'big boys at **X**' who were responsible for setting many of the financial, and other, guidelines within which **B** had to operate. At the same time developing a strategy was considered a way of 'stealing a march' on the other divisions within the group, none of whom, at that stage, had begun to develop a business strategy, and who therefore looked less than 'market driven' by comparison [10].

For senior management in both company **A** and **B**, the deployment of strategic discourse was designed to demonstrate to various 'significant others', as well as to themselves and their own staff, exactly how 'in command' they were. In other words, the development of a corporate strategy was intended to indicate the degree to which their management of the business was 'rational', 'enterprising', and, therefore, 'ethical'.

To describe strategy in retailing simply in these terms may give the impression that 'strategy' is nothing but a 'floating signifier' with no 'real' material referent, or material effects. However, this is not the impression I wish to convey. First, as the examples cited above indicate, to consider the discourse of strategy as 'immaterial' fails to perceive the very *real* sense in which 'image' and 'identity' management are crucial components of doing business in the modern world. If you can't speak it - strategy, excellence etc - then other people may think you haven't got it. Secondly, and more importantly, the discourse of strategy defines its object. In other words, the activity of retail management does not exist objectively and therefore meaningfully outside of it's dominant discursive articulation. The deployment of strategic discourse in the retail industry redefines and reconstructs what it means to be engaged in the activity of retailing. Rather than maintaining some 'real' or originary identity outside of its dominant discursive articulation, retailing assumes a *new identity* through its constitution in strategic discourse.

As Knights et al (1991: 10) have argued, 'strategic discourse' is one in which the

'external' and 'internal' environment are reconstituted as a problem for which strategy offers itself as a solution. This solution takes the form of constituting and monitoring the environment in ways that produce 'knowledge' which is then used as the basis for the organization to construct strategic plans as a framework and guide to its activities. But an effect of strategic discourse is to constitute the organization and the individual subject as self-consciously aware of the competitive struggle for power and to render them 'open' to techniques of rational control and evaluation in its pursuit.

Thus, the subject of strategy - whether organizational or individual - is very much an 'enterprising' subject: a calculating, self-reflexive, 'economic' subject; one that calculates about itself and works upon itself in order to better itself.

At company A, for example, the development of strategic thinking is linked to an 'avalanche of printed numbers' (Hacking, 1983). The collection, collation and utilisation of increasing amounts of (and the increasing quality of) information - the production of knowledge - is seen as a crucial component of the company's success. A variety of broadly 'informational' technologies - external (lifestyling) and internal (personnel auditing) market research, EPoS, DPP and Value Chain Analysis - have been deployed, the 'knowledge' produced from which has been used as the basis for the Secure Shopping Strategy of 'Total Customer Responsiveness' [11]. So, for example, knowledge produced in this manner was utilised to construct a 'brand image' or 'personality' for the company, and a series of Secure Shopping Commitments (**See Fig.1**), which was to act a framework for all its activities. According to the company's Merchandising Director, 'research' had shown that A's personality was best imagined

> as the proprietor of our business. Controversially, she's a woman: attractive, mature, fashion conscious, friendly and approachable in a down to earth sort of way. She knows what she likes and what her customers like, and thats the sort of merchandise she puts into her stores. Its tasteful, but not too ephemeral or outrageous, its as up to date as it needs to be in a world where quality and

durability are becoming more important... But neither she nor the merchandise she choses is ever dull. Above all, our personality understands and cares for all her customers. She's sympathetic towards them and knowledgeable when thay are making a serious purchase. She's also fun, and, occasionally, daring when they want to pamper themselves. And she's full of great and unusual gift ideas...This personality will be behind, and influence, every aspect of our retailing activity - our merchandise, the information we provide about it, the tone of our advertising and point of sale material, the way our staff talk to and greet our customers, our store layout and environment and our after sales service...This is A as we want our customers to think of her [12].

Everything that happens at A is 'quilted' through the 'nodal point' of the SSS - or company 'personality' - and explicated in its terms. So, for example, when, in 1990, the company announced that hundreds of supervisory and middle management positions 'in-store' were to be shed, this 'delayering' programme was articulated as a fundamental element of A's long-term strategy. There was no alternative. The redundancies were represented as an essential element of getting 'closer to the customer', of governing in an enterprising way - 'these changes were made to clarify accountability, increase flexibility and reduce bureaucracy'. Significantly, the changes were initiated as an empowering exercise for those 'at the sharp end of the business' - the shop floor employees. They were being introduced, it was argued, as part of a long-term commitment by senior management to get in touch with 'the most important people in our business', to facilitate communication and participation, and to give those 'on the front line' more power and autonomy in their work. Redundancy for some ('a tiny, tiny fraction of the total workforce'), while regrettable, was an empowering exercise for the majority, allowing 'them', the 'real' people in the business to experience 'ownership' [13].

According to the personnel director, news of the redundancies was well received both externally and internally because it was recognised to be of strategic importance:

Now the City, interestingly, received it very well. They knew what we were

about, why we'd done it... As far as 'in-house' is concerned, one has to say, genuinely, that the vast majority of people, including those who are at the moment unlikely to have a job, have said "we understand what you are doing, we know why you've done it, and we accept it. We're not happy about it, but we understand it" [18].

'Delayering' is therefore represented as evidence of governing in an enterprising manner. Not to have shed the positions in question would have been unethical (because of being unprofitable, inefficient etc.) Meanwhile, the (mooted) 'acceptance' of the situation by those adversely affected has two major consequences. First, it legitimates the action of senior management and bolsters their claim to be governing 'strategically'. Second, it serves to further constitute the individual as an enterprising subject of strategy. 'Acceptance' indicates that the individual subject is governing him/herself in an enterprising manner, and hence, ethically.

Similarly, at company **B** 'the strategy', as it is known, has begun to permeate all aspects of the business, reconceptualising the internal world of the company and its relationship with its environment.

'The strategy' was based on results obtained from 'the largest piece of market research ever instigated by a division of company **X**'. The 'Strategy Review' document that forms a 'guide to action' was constructed by **B**'s board of directors in conjunction with the external consultants who carried out the 'Brand Positioning and Personality Study' for the company. Research from the latter revealed that the main traditional market for **B**'s product - the 15-17 year old 'young woman' - was shrinking, while the top end of their target market, traditionally more marginal to the business, - the 18-24 year old woman - would become increasingly more important to the business. However, it was this latter group that had proved most negative towards the company's present 'offer'. **B**'s 'noisy, tarty, fun, party image' which once they had enjoyed, it was argued, 'is a big turn-off for them now' because 'they're more aspirational, they're more individualistic, they want a more mature quality product and retail environment. They want a different shopping experience'[15]. Therefore 'the strategy' was designed to cater more to this target group by constructing a new 'personality' - physical and

emotional - for B. This 'personality' was initiated to reflect the 'aspirational lifestyle' of this group but without losing too much of the 15-17 year old market group at the same time. Senior management hoped that the strategy would enable B to become a 'conveyor belt for young women from their teens to "thirtysomething"' [16].

The strategic objectives of the company were condensed into a simple one page statement of intent (**See Fig. 2**). In order to achieve these objectives and therefore 'satisfy the demands and aspirations of the target market' senior management argued that 'B will need to address the issues simultaneously across all areas of the business' [17]. With this in mind it was decided that each area of the business would be encouraged to 'assess who its main customers were inside the business', and to set about providing the best service possible to those customers. In effect, everything had to be geared towards 'staying close to the customer' and, in particular, equipping the 'front-line' with the tools with which to service the customer in a quality manner. In this way the organization would become more cohesive, more flexible, more accountable and, most importantly, more profitable. Senior management viewed the strategy as inaugurating 'a management revolution'. Communication, consultation and participation were the new watchwords of management style. The old (and freely admitted) reactive authoritarianism of, what management termed , JFDI - Just Fucking Do It - was out because 'the strategy' demands it.

> The strategy is becoming the structure of the business, in terms of all the things happening in the business being linked to one or more elements of the strategy we're trying to achieve. The strategy provides the overall rationale for every process in the business, the rationale for why we're doing something that was perhaps less obvious and less easy to associate with in the past...You've got to change your method of operating, change your approach. You've got to be more consultative, you've got to be bothered to take time to consult with people in other functions, to talk to them. I think once you've done it a few times you actually learn you can get a lot out of it. But it is a matter of people changing their style and I think its all part of the strategy...You really have to learn a new

language. Its not easy having to consult rather than just doing it yourself and banging it down the line. You have to think "I should consult X, Y and Z on this", even though the temptation in a quick-direction changing organization like this is to do it yourself, because everything affects everything else. You have a trend in a garment area overnight and you have to deal with it on the retail side, and on the merchandise side etc etc. It effects everyone so you all have to be more communicative, hanging it round a longer term framework, which is the strategy [18].

The instigation of a new management induction programme at **B** provides a simple illustration of the way in which the demands of the strategy have restructured the internal world of the company. Before the strategy was formulated the training department had spent eighteen months designing a new induction programme for store managers. They had done this largely under their own steam - it was seen as their own project. With the advent of the strategy, the whole programme was reviewed and found wanting. It didn't 'fit' with the objectives of the strategy . Neither its mode of construction, nor its content were judged 'strategic'. The training department set about revising the programme, this time in formal consultation with other functions, in particular its main 'customer', retail operations. Rather than simply providing an updated introduction to the technicalities of retail management at **B** - cash handling, systems, and administration etc (the central elements of their first attempt) - the new programme was considered 'strategy led'. It focused upon the importance of managers as 'inspirational leaders' and motivators of staff - the importance of obtaining productivity through people if the company was to achieve its strategic objectives - and stressed the necessity of store managers feeling 'personal responsibility' for, and 'ownership' of, the strategy in their own stores. Through thinking and acting strategically, the training department created an induction programme that made up new ways for store managers to be at **B**.

We're looking for managers with the right managerial skills. The fact that they can cash-up and do the admin. is not as important as being able to manage their team. To get the best out of their team. So having the right interpersonal skills

and the right attitude. Its the management skills, the people skills that are most important to us now...The image and attitude being passed down now is one of empowerment. Managers should feel more ownership of the business at their level, to the degree that their more responsible for it in terms of having their own budgets and recruiting and training their own staff [19].

Thus, the deployment of strategic discourse can be seen to have an effect on subjectivity. Within company **B**, the strategy sought a new type of manager and created different ways for staff to be at work. Staying close to the customer by 'satisfying the needs and aspirations of the target group' not only 'makes up the consumer', it demands 'productivity through people'. It creates meaning for people at work through constructing new ways for people to be; it emphasises the importance of generating a greater sense of identification between staff and company and of encouraging every member of the organization to feel personally accountable for its success.

The focus is very much 'inwards' in as much as we're trying to get people to, you know, 'Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country' and to try and defuse this 'them' and 'us' between the centre and the areas and branches and make people, not 'make people', but try and give people an understanding of how they can pick things up for themselves and run with it. Yes, the centre will be looking at moving things forward but there's a lot of things that people can do for themselves. In effect, the centre becomes a facilitator for the areas and branches to get on with the job at hand, to feel 'ownership' of those jobs themselves [20].

For senior management at **B**, the promulgation of a 'new culture of communication and consultation' is designed to ensure that high quality, personal service can flourish in a business where improvements in operating efficency have mainly been achieved through a rigorous centralisation of control. By attempting, effectively, to 'responsibilise' staff in-store, senior

management can dispense with direct control - which is no longer deemed to be economically efficient - in favour of a culturally constructed form of self-regulation - the ultimate form of 'cheap government'. According to an Executive at Company **B**, 'the strategy is really all about cultural change. It had to be. The strategy was only acceptable to the Board of **X** if it didn't cost anything to implement. And changing the culture doesn't cost much. Its cheap. So that's why our MD says "Its got to be a culture change"'[21].

As I indicated above, store managers at **B** are redefined as skilled motivators of their staff, encouraging them, through a variety mechanisms, to feel more personally responsible for the financial success of their own store.

> They [the shop-floor staff] need more areas where they can feel more involvement, where its not a matter of being told exactly what to do. Its to give them more a sense of 'this is what we need to do, this is why we're doing it, these are going to be the benefits, how do you best think you can help?'...And giving them pieces of information and then saying: "these are the guidelines, this is the result we have to achieve, but I'll leave it to you to do it as you think best fits. I'll leave it to *you*. And letting them plan their own destiny. Not so much ordering directly, otherwise its all directives and there's no freedom at all. What we want is channelled freedom, self-management, ownership. We've got to get people to think and to participate with the business through their own decisions rather than somebody else's decision that's just being carried forward [22].

At company **B** the demands of customer-led strategy are represented as inaugurating a shift in control away from direct 'JFDI' dictat to a more 'trusting' communicative and consultative form of management, where individual self-development (for both store managers and shop-floor staff) and the achievement of strategic objectives are happily married. In other words, a more direct and authoritarian form of rule is giving way to a culturally controlled form of de-control, or self-regulating 'government at a distance'.

For senior management at company **B** (and the same could certainly be said of Company

A), being 'strategic' involves reconciling a rigorous centralization with a maximisation of individual responsibility and initiative. To govern in a 'strategic' manner is to 'totalize' and 'individualize' at one and the same time (Foucault, 1988), or to put it in the terminology of 'Excellence', it is to be simultaneously 'loose and tight' (Peters & Waterman, 1982:318): 'organizations that live by the loose-tight principle are on the one hand rigidly controlled, yet at the same time allow (indeed, insist on) autonomy, entrepreneurship, and innovation from the rank and file'.

'control at a distance': culture, subjectivity and the management of meaning in retailing

As I indicated earlier in the chapter, for Peters & Waterman (1982: 321-323) the key to 'loose-tight' is culture. They argue that the effective management of beliefs, values and meanings can transform an apparent contradiction, philosophically speaking, - between increasing central control whilst increasing individual responsibility and autonomy - into 'no contradiction at all'. If the organization's 'culture' is 'right', they suggest, - if its members learn to adopt a particular relation to self - then efficiency, economy, autonomy, quality, and innovation all 'become words that belong on the same side of the coin' (Peters & Waterman, 1982: 321).

Thus in the discourse of 'Excellence' the notion of 'culture' appears to offer the prospect of 'having ones cake and eating it too' (Peters & Waterman, 1982: 318) through aligning the individual's search for personal meaning with the goals and objectives of the organization for which he/she works.

As I indicated in the previous chapter, staying 'close to the customer' is constitutively linked to obtaining 'productivity through people'. It is 'culture' that provides the link. The quest for 'quality service' in contemporary British retailing, for example, is represented as a battle for the imagination, not only of the consumer, but also of the retail employee. The effective management of 'meanings', 'feelings', and 'beliefs' that I have spoken about is considered to be of crucial import to the delivery of this 'quality service'.

At company A, 'service' is now viewed as one of the company's 'core values'.

According to the Merchandising Director at A, the company shares 'the view of many commentators that service is becoming one of the really major differentiators chosen by retailers to achieve their competitive edge' [23]. However, senior management believe that a 'service orientation' can only come from shop-floor staff who are committed to giving it. It can't be ordered or enforced upon them. The logistics and geography of the business alone militate against the day-to-day direct supervision of shop-floor staff [24]. Thus, 'quality service' must be fostered in the 'soul' of the retail employee and cannot be successfully imposed by managerial dictat.

> You have to get into people. Its this 'true involvement'. I emphasise the 'true'...Thats the winner. You won't win by a stick. You won't win by a carrot. You'll only win by really making your people feel 'I want to do this', not 'have to', not 'being attracted to', but 'I want to'. And that's really the key [25].

Increasingly, then, the relations of employment at Company A are becoming 'matters of discourse' (Laclau, 1990: 185) - ' getting the message across' to everyone to speak the same language - the universal discourse of Secure Shopping - and to identify themselves with the 'core values' of the company through 'internalizing' the corporate culture.

> You have to win hearts and minds, and it's jargon, I know, but hearts and minds, energies of every member of our staff, every single one, from those who've been with us for a long time, the cynics, the people who are always positive, the new joins that joined as a saturday girl last saturday in Middle Wallop, every one of them you want to win. A massive undertaking, obviously, and maybe you'll never get there, but, in principle, you had to do it so that all 40,000 odd people in A would eventually be singing from the same hymn sheet, in the same key, facing the same direction, knowing where they're going and you've got that harmony that says 'we're all in this together, its a total team effort'...[And]...you had to indicate as a company that you really

meant it this time. Many companies issue a 'customer of the year' theme, or whatever. But this [the SSS] was forever. This was fundamental. And you had to get across to all our people that this is essential, that they are essential to it, that we are determined to see it through 'cause its in everybody's interests: customers, staff, management, company, shareholders, the City. Its about us moving forward into the '90s, and, indeed, into the 21st century [26].

For senior management at **A**, the 'responsibilising' of staff to deliver 'quality service' could only be achieved through the prior 'responsibilising' of store management. Obtaining 'commitment' at store level was seen very much as the task of individual store managers. With this in mind, managers were redefined as the effective 'owners' of their stores by being given their own budgets and performance targets, as well as responsibility for the recruitment and training of their staff. Managers were reimagined as 'inspirational leaders' motivating the 'heroes' on the front line to deliver what the customers demanded: 'quality service'. And, once again, individual responsibility and accountability was represented as simultaneously profitable and ethical.

> I think the pressures on line management to manage change is greater than its ever been. That doesn't just apply to **A**. One could say that ten-fifteen years ago the amount of fat in an organization was gross. Because the pressures weren't there there was a degree of relaxation. That has all changed and now you're in an ever-changing environment and you have to be ready to change, and change effectively. And pressure comes on line management to effect that change. Now we're as good as anybody, probably better than many, in terms of our selection processes, and in our training programmes for managers, but I don't underestimate the difficulties that we have in making sure that in a thousand different sites around the country, our managers get the right message every time and communicate the message consistently and effectively. It isn't easy, and they don't always necessarily have the quality of people in every area

to deliver Secure Shopping, no matter how good a manager they are. But I don't apologise for saying that managers, store managers, have more personnel requirement and more personal accountability and responsibility than they have ever had before, and quite right. We've had to devolve. I think we almost spoon fed the personnel aspect of management ten, fifteen years ago, and we paid the price in a way. As far as the sales assistant, and the back shop person, is concerned in our stores the store manager is company **A**, and everything he or she portrays is what **A** is all about, and therefore it is so important that the store manager portrays the right image and conducts him or her self correctly and communicates effectively...And the more information we get back about our managers from staff, the tougher we'll be in getting the right managers. For **A** to throw out a store manager was unheard of. It happens now. We have to be fair to our staff, so much depends on them [27].

Even at company **D** (a multiple mixed retailer) where the existence of a strong paternalist culture is deemed to have been a major element in the company's long-term success, the relationship between the organization and its members is being radically re-structured to ensure 'total customer responsiveness'. The substantial welfare benefits enjoyed by staff in the past (and often represented as the main source of the company's higher then average productivity rates and substantially lower than average staff turnover rates) are now considered as just so much 'mollycoddling'. As one City analyst commented with regard to **D**'s paternalist policies: 'to a certain extent **D** has always been carrying a lot of fat, and it now looks as if its time for a diet'. The implication of this and other City predictions was to signal to senior management at the company that a new regime was called for, more in tune with the 'realities of the market'. In other words, if they were to prove they were capable of governing in an enterprising manner, and hence rationally and ethically, senior management at **D** would have to ditch the company's welfare mentality. Gradually, such a shift has taken place. The traditional paternalist culture is now imagined as fostering a 'dependency mentality', stifling the individual initiative and enterprise necessary for survival in an increasingly competitive retail environment. In a move reminiscent of Thatcherite attacks on the welfare state a senior

exectuive at **D** argued that

> the 'Mother and Father knows best' attitudes of the company are going. They were resented by intelligent, bright people in our business because, you know, mum and dad don't always know best...We're on shifting ground and its not what it used to be. If I could sum it up in a couple of words it is moving away from many aspects of paternalism towards a culture of partnership. It is putting more responsibility onto individuals, in an area like development, for example, for their own self-development, to take responsibility for doing something about developing themselves; learning more about their job, more about the business, making themselves more aware about what's going on and less about waiting to go on a course to be told. And they could do that, individually, by during the course of, let's say, the appraisal process, discussing with their line boss their own preferences for further promotion, development and growth within the business, and areas that they could mutually agree should be addressed to actually get from where they are now to where they want to be, and then taking responsibility to seek out within the company all the facilities that there are available to go and get some of that [28].

Senior management at **D** stress that 'paternalism and bureaucracy' engendered the impression amongst store managers that if you kept your nose clean and did as you were told then everything would be just fine. This has to change, they argue, and the emphasis has now shifted towards a more pro-active conceptualisation of the store manager's role, and that of individual shop-floor employees too:

> within a store the best management do make our staff feel as if they have real, not only accountability, but authority - because one goes with the other - over the area they're responsible for. And we are making more changes in management structures [ie. transferring more functional responsibilities on to the store manager etc] which will actually reflect this demand for 'delegated

> responsibility' and encourage it further. It is increasingly recognised and rewarded in management so that people who operate in that way are promoted. Fifteen years ago people who operated in the other way [ie. obeying orders to the letter, taking little personal initiative] would have been promoted [29].

As developments at Company **D** once again indicate, the discourse of 'Enterprise' - the development of a corporate 'Enterprise' culture - links together customer satisfaction, individual responsibility and accountability, self-development, economy, and efficiency into a chain of equivalences. By making all employees more individually responsible for the success of the business, senior management at **D** assume that everybody - from shareholder to cash 'n' wrap sales assistant - will benefit [30]. So, for example, head office costs will fall as certain functions, such as personnel, 'slim down' and become facilitators to the front-line rather than dependency enducing 'spoon-feeders'; and individual employees will be more productive as their own self-development becomes increasingly aligned to the development of the company as a whole, thereby simultaneously ensuring greater customer satisfaction and lower management costs. In sum, both individual and organization will become more 'Enterprising'.

Interestingly, it is at Company **C** (a multiple niche retailer operating largely through franchises) that a culture of 'responsibilisation' and 'Enterprise' is perhaps most fully developed. **C** is a very atypical retailing organization in many ways. Senior management consider the company to have a 'willfully perverse attitude to retailing', as do various significant others - the City, the media, and other multiple retailers. As one City analyst recently commented: 'not many companies wait until they are capitalized at over £500 million before establishing a top-level management board, but then Company **C** has never played it by the business school book'.

The company was born of, and continues to be dominated by, and infused with, the charismatic authority of its founder and Managing Director, a woman - an unusual enough situation in British retailing - who views the business as a spiritual and moral project rather than just another retailing venture. **C** has a very distinct 'aesthetic and moral vision' (Peters, 1987) derived largely from the counter-cultural inheritance of the late 1960s and the politics of

the new social movements in particular, which permeates everything that happens in the business. However this (left of centre) 'spiritual' agenda is married to a very pronounced will to 'Excellence', indicating that current trends in management discourse are in no way the exclusive property of New-Right ideologues, as some have suggested (Legge, 1989; Silver, 1987). Indeed, senior management at C regard the 'responsibilising' of staff as a radical empowering manoeuvre in distinct opposition to the doctrines of 'Thatcherism' as they understand them. According to the Managing Director at C the, mainly, young people who work for the company 'are in search of present day heroes or heroines. For them their work is about a search for daily meaning, as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor. They see the State has defined power as the power inherent in things - in tax revenue, in barrels of oil, in miles of road. These young people define power as the power inherent in dreams, in songs, in reach for the human spirit. They are open to leadership that has vision'. Once again the language is that of 'enterprise', but the political project that it articulates is very different to that advanced by the New Right (Heelas, 1992: 158ff). However, commonalities are forged in the sense that both share a vision of how individual human beings should be: active not passive; self-reliant; accountable and responsible for their actions.

For C's Managing Director and Chairman, the company has to strive for 'Excellence' in all its activities because so much rides upon its continued existence, in particular its stated mission to 'educate consumers to take an active stance on important moral issues', its 'community care' work both in the UK, and in developing countries, and its attitude towards the experience of work - providing 'a motivating and empowering experience for people at work'.

Although senior management at the company are very aware of their need to placate the City and their shareholders. The development of a business strategy, built around the need for 'a culture of accountability', is represented, first and foremost, as a necessary move to avoid the company ever being taken over by 'the men in suits'. 'The Charter', as the strategy document is known, is designed to provide a 'structure and culture' which will diminish the company's dependence upon it's two founders - in the context of the rapidly increasing scale and scope of the company's operations - in particular, its Managing Director, by 'giving the

business to its people'.

At the heart of 'the Charter' is the idea of 'a culture of accountability', whereby every member of the organization is encouraged to become more responsible for the continued existence of the business and therefore the spiritual project it embodies. Concomitantly, increased individual accountability and responsibility is represented as the logical continuation of the Managing Director's vision that 'work' should empower, motivate and energize people. It is considered a means of 'infecting people with energy, excitement and enthusiasm for their jobs and the company'. By becoming more individually responsible, accountable, active and participative every member of C should become a better worker, a better citizen and a better self.

'The Charter' was formulated by senior management as series of interrelated 'principles of success'. These included: 'caring', 'challenge', 'success', 'humanity', and 'integrity'. In order to ensure that every aspect of the business conformed to these principles a number of working parties, or project teams, were initiated. These groups were made up of people from all levels and areas of the business directly elected by their peers. Their remit was to investigate current practice in a number of key areas of the business, and to formulate a future best possible practice in those areas in keeping with the principles of the 'Charter'. So, for example, working parties were introduced to look at appraisal processes; induction; fundraising; environment; and recruitment. The ongoing ideas emanating from these working parties are presented to 'The Charter Steering Committee' which is made up of senior management (unelected so far, but that is all set to change to include staff elected from all levels) who comment and advise on these proposals and 'steer them forward'. This system is viewed as an aid to the self-reflexivity, cohesiveness, efficiency and economy of the company's operations, and as advancing the cause of individual self-reflexivity, development, responsibility and accountability of all the organization's members.

For senior management at C, the Charter is the culture of the company. It articulates the core values of the organization with which everyone is expected to identify.

The culture of the company is described best in saying that there are different principles that should flow through everything that we do, and those principles are 'the Charter'. And the Charter says we should try and challenge ourselves continuously. So its a culture of challenge, accountability, innovation, integrity and caring. So its committed to care in the community and care in the workplace, and interested in challenge both in the workplace and in the community....In terms of the feel of the company, there's a definite sense of family. The whole idea of the charter was to bolster that sense of family. The whole idea that it was instituted, was founded on the MD and Chairman's fear that if anything happened to them that the company wouldn't continue in the same way. The MD made this video which was how the whole idea was launched. And she said: 'in twenty to thirty years time I'm not going to be here to make sure that the shops carry on the way I want them to and you're the best ones to do it, because you know exactly how they should be carried on'. Its this whole 'its yours as much as its ours, and you have the power to make things happen' [31].

This move towards personal responsibility, individual accountability and 'ownership' is evident throughout the company. In training and selection, for example, shop-floor staff are being encouraged to play a much greater role. If store staff exercised more personal choice in creating the shop-floor team, it was argued, and took personal responsibility for training their fellow employees, then they would be more committed to their store, be more likely to serve customers in a friendly and professional manner, become more developed as people, and less able to offer excuses for poor performance. In turn this would lead to a reduction in operational costs - fewer head office training professionals would be required, as would fewer management staff in-store - while individual employees would become more responsible for the success of their store.

> The company is very interested in us all becoming more accountable. That's how we're going forward, and that's what we've let the City know is

happening. And, one thing, for example, is recruitment and selection, where the people chose the people they're going to be working for and with. And in the shops we're also letting the employees chose their colleagues. My department now has a very limited role in recruitment. We've basically devolved all responsibility for that and given it to the staff. Not so much to the management, but to the staff. So they're trained in watching auditions and that sort of thing [32].

In every area of the business, no matter how apparently trivial, the drive for personal accountability is set to introduce changes in conduct. There is an awareness that responsibility and self-reflexivity do have financial spin-offs, but cost-cutting is not the main generator. The relationship of the individual to herself and her company is the key. Being personally responsible is promoted as a virtue in itself: if everyone takes care of themselves everything will take a turn for the better.

yes, financially, I cannot deny we get strict objectives all the time but that is certainly not what is emphasised. Its not what people talk about. Accountability is all we hear about. Accountability means being responsible for yourself and being responsible for your job. Stop waiting to be told to do things, take the initiative and do things for yourself. Basically, become more enterprising. A very mundane example, I suppose, is the chairman went down to payroll where he discovered that the payroll supervisor spent incredible amounts of time answering phone calls about how much holiday time people had left, so this infuriated him. And he came up to our Charter meeting and he said:'This is ridiculous. People have to be responsible for their own holiday. I don't want to know that people take the holiday allocated to them. If they take too much that's their problem. They're affecting people in their department and that'll sort itself out'. So what we do now is we all have our own holiday cards and people take individual responsibility for their own holiday entitlements. That's

a petty example but its indicative of the ideas that are being fed through everywhere. It's just take responsibility for yourself and your own job and take the initiative and go forward and stop asking for permission...But I would say the whole idea is not just accountability, but in actually making people become more accountable they're more worthy in their own eyes as well, from their own point of view as well as from the company's point of view [33].

There is one programme at **C** which takes this obsession with personal acountability to its logical conclusion. Senior management have come up with the idea of 'giving' a number of the company's centrally owned shops to staff to run as their own businesses in partnership with **C.** After six years the store would become a franchise - which management and staff could sell - but in the period leading up to that time the store would be run as a separate business - a franchisee only in terms of stock - with the management and staff earning all the profits from trading, over and above a 12% management fee payable annually to Company **C.** Although details of the programme have yet to be finalised the process of preparing the selected stores for 'independence' is firmly under way. An Ownership Development Programme is being initiated whereby a team of advisers reporting from Head office will visit the stores in question

> preparing them with a special training package on how to become 'owners' in the sense of payroll, their profit and loss sheets etc. Everything like that...It'll be very interesting to see if all of a sudden they're not pushing for as many staff as they normally push for. Because they'll be able to see what business is really all about. They're having their security blanket removed whilst at the same time being given a chance to make more of themselves [34].

Once again, facing the realities of the market is represented as an opportunity to develop oneself in a virtuous manner. The 'security' of central control is viewed as an impediment to the full realisation of potential, and as an expensive and immoral illusion that can no longer hold:

we've let them [store mangement and staff] be in their own little dream world to a certain extent as far as how the shop works is concerned...I would say that really the generator of this push forward is making people aware, because we realised...that people are just not aware. They're managing that shop, working in that shop, they're doing it, but they're not owning that shop at all. They are only just becoming aware of wage costs and how much of a percentage they have on the floor. So its a push forward to make them more responsible [35].

At Company C the 'culture of accountability' 'integrates the notions of economic health, serving customers and making meanings down the line' (Peters & Waterman, 1982: 103). However, the powerful 'aesthetic and moral vision' propagated by senior management only finds life 'in details, not broad strokes' (Peters, 1987:404). In other words, the 'culture' of the company is only operationalised through particular practices and technologies - through 'specific measures' (Hunter, 1987). As I indicated earlier in the chapter, the discourse of 'Enterprise'/'Excellence' takes a technological form, permeating a variety of often simple mechanisms - appraisal systems, communications groups, recruitment 'auditions' and application forms, for example - through which senior management in retail organizations seek to 'govern' the conduct of persons in order to achieve the ends they consider to be desirable.

As developments at Company C illustrate the discourse of Enterprise brooks no opposition between the mode of self-presentation required of managers and employees and the ethics of the personal self. Becoming a better worker is the same thing as becoming a better self. In other words, under the regime of Enterprise, or 'Excellence', *technologies of power* 'which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject' - and *technologies of the self* - 'which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality' - are imperceptibly merged (Foucault, 1988: 18) [36]. The value of self-realization, of personal

responsibility and accountability, of self-promotion, self-direction and self-management are both personally attractive and economically desirable (Miller & Rose, 1990; Hollway, 1991).

In the final section of the chapter I want to examine some of the new technologies of regulation being deployed within certain multiple retailing organizations. I hope to show how these mechanisms seek to align the self-regulating and 'self-actualising' capacities of individuals with the 'strategic' objectives - as delineated by senior management and their symbolic intermediary advisers - of the companies for which they work.

'adding value to yourself': technologies of regulation in retailing

In indicating the ways in which the success of individual retail organizations is increasingly imagined through the discourse of enterprise I have already referred to a number of 'technologies' or mechanisms of regulation. As I indicated in chapter three, the term 'technologies' refers to the use of human scientific knowledge to specify ways of doing things in a reproducible manner. Thus, 'technologies of regulation' rely upon human scientific knowledge to channel human conduct into certain reproducible patterns. At company A, for example, I indicated that a variety of new 'technologies' were being deployed to give effect to the 'strategic' aspirations of senior management. These included: techniques for promoting motivation through the construction of a regime of values within the firm, and techniques for reducing dependency by reorganizing management structures. I argued that these mechanisms were inscribed with the presuppositions of the enterprising self, striving for fulfilment and personal meaning. In other words, these technologies are infused with the values of self-realization, self-direction and self-management; they seek to act upon the personal capacities of subjects, channelling the conduct of individuals into certain patterns.

As the autonomous subjectivity of the retail employee has emerged as a vital economic resource - the 'strategic human resource' - senior management in the industry have become increasingly dependent upon an objective knowledge, a scientific expertise and rational technology of the personal and interpersonal. As a number of commentators have argued (Hollway, 1984,1991; Rose, 1990) during the last decade there has been a substantial growth in the practical involvement of psychological expertise in the everyday life of the modern

business enterprise with psychologically trained experts carrying out such tasks as selection, appraisal, promotion, job evaluation and so forth either as permanent employees or as contracted private consultants.

Although, at first sight, the image of the entrepreneur seems far removed from the world of 'psycho-therapeutics', this opposition does not appear to hold. As Rose (1990: 14) has argued,

> therapeutics can forge alliances between the liberation of the self and the pathways to personal success, promising to break through the blockages that trap us into powerlessness and passivity and underachievement. Hence therapeutics can appeal to both sides of the employment contract: it will make us better workers, at the same time, it will make us better selves. Therapy can thus offer to free each of us from our psychic chains. We can become more enterprising, take control our careers, transform ourselves into high fliers, achieve excellence and fulfil ourselves, not <u>in spite of</u> work, but <u>by means of</u> work.

In other words, psychotherapeutic technologies of the self are designed to cut across divisions between 'work' and 'non-work' life; between both the 'top' and 'bottom' and the 'inside' and 'outside' of the corporation. Within the psycho-therapeutic discourse of 'Enterprise' there is no longer room for any contradiction or conflict between the motives and desires of the employee as an individual and the goals and objectives of the organization for which he or she works. The individual human being at work, as much as outside of it, is considered to be engaged in a project to shape his or her life as an autonomous individual driven by motives of self-fulfilment. In short, no matter what role they may perform, all people produce themselves at work.

There is a considerable amount of evidence from within the retailing industry which suggests that Enterprising technologies of regulation are being deployed quite extensively by retailers, and that these technologies are covering a much wider range of employees.

At the multiple mixed retailer W. H. Smith, for example, up to three hundred middle managers are to be 'retrained' following a large scale 'management style' survey in which staff were asked to comment upon their managers' performance across a wide range of competencies. The company surveyed 3,500 of its 16,000 staff in 'one of the first schemes in Britain allowing staff to assess managers'. Each employee was asked to complete, anonymously, a questionnaire rating their managers' qualities. On a scale of one to five, the four hundred managers whose performance was assessed rated an average 4.52 for being 'prepared to make decisions' but only 3.12 on being 'someone I could go to if I have personal problems. Other low ratings included 'someone who keeps me motivated', 'someone who is prepared to change his or her view if I have something useful to add', and 'someone who creates a happy working environment'.

The company's Retail and Personnel Training Manager said that senior management had expected managers to perform better in traditional roles because the company had trained them to do so in the past: 'those are the things we have concentrated on, and they are the traditional measures of a good manager, but we are now saying that a manager's job is broader than it was in the past and we are asking more from them'. As a result of the exercise every manager deemed to require 'retraining' attended an Assessment Centre where they were interviewed by an occupational psychologist, informed of their individual results, and offered guidance on how to work on themselves in order to better themselves and become more motivational and inspirational managers of people [37].

Similarly, at department store chain Dickens & Jones, senior management's 'pursuit of service excellence' led to an analogous exercise, this time aimed at shop-floor staff. The company employed the services of a private consultancy to act as anonymous 'professional' shoppers who systematically surveyed the performance of sales employees against a pre-determined and weighted set of means. Although these professional shoppers remained anonymous, staff were informed of their presence and the purpose of the exercise. Over a one month period 184 full and part-time staff in London were individually assessed on four separate occasions, each time by different consultant shoppers. Emphasis was placed on manner of approach, attitude/rapport, efficiency and farewell. The score were recorded then tabulated to arrive at an overall assessment. These were communicated to staff, individually,

in the form of an appraisal and then used 'to reward levels of excellence and/or identify training needs'. In order to celebrate individual 'heroes', senior management at the company presented each employee attaining eighty per cent or over with a gift voucher and certificate, and invited them to attend a champagne party in their honour [38].

In both of the above cases a distinct interrelation can be delineated between enterprising 'technologies of power' - an objectivizing of the work-based subject through the use of devices of calculation: an examining, quantifying and grading of individuals - and enterprising 'technologies of the self' - practical psycho-therapeutic counselling through which people can work upon themselves to better themselves, as workers and human beings. Through the deployment of such technologies senior management at these companies have shifted the form of control exercised over staff away from close, formal direction towards a self-regulated, and self-producing, 'government at a distance' - or 'controlled de-control'.

As these examples indicate, the delivery of 'quality service' - to both internal and external customers - is deemed to necessitate employees becoming aware of their crucial role in 'adding value' through quality 'emotional labour', both to themselves and to the company for which they work.

According to both the Managing Director, and Retail Operations Director, at Company B, the 'excellent customer service demanded by our customers' entails a new approach to the recruitment, selection and training of both managers and staff. No longer content to 'recruit in haste and repent at leisure', senior management are looking for a particular 'type of personality' to service their stores. The Personnel and Training Department at B is currently charged with developing a number of programmes to give effect to these aspirations. In conjunction with a range of other departments, as well as a private management consultancy, they are creating a formal 'Person Specification' for the job of Sales Assistant which will act as a guide to recruitment for store managers in selecting 'staff with the right image and attitude'. At the same time Personnel and Training staff are also considering the introduction of psychometric testing for sales assistant positions [40]. With regard to training, the emphasis is shifting away from 'technical skills' - till operation and dressing room procedures - towards the development of 'interpersonal skills' and 'self-learning'. The behavioural and attitudinal

characteristics of shop-floor employees as individuals are now seen to be of vital importance: 'we are saying that personality and the way people behave are as important to us as any other factor' [41].

At some of the company's recently opened stores, staff are being trained to view customer care as a series of skills which can be learnt. Through interpersonal training in Transaction Analysis staff in these stores are taught how to 'effectively manage a transaction with a customer'. In Transactional Analysis each individual is represented as exhibiting three types of 'ego states' in social relations: those of Parent, Adult, and Child. Thus any interaction between two individuals can be analysed in terms of whether it is Parent-Child, Adult - Adult, Adult-Child etc., and therefore effectively managed to obtain a favourable outcome.

> So when a customer comes in you identify whether they're Parent, Adult or Child, and you respond accordingly to get an 'uncrossed' transaction. If they come in and you want to move them out of one mode and into another, then you respond to their stimulus and then you move into Adult, or Parent, or Child and it works...We want 'uncrossed' transactions and not 'crossed' ones because they work in a positive direction. Its all about being aware of what mode the customer is in and responding accordingly [42].

Training in Transactional Analysis is an attempt to provide staff with a new way of seeing, and intervening in, social relations. Moreover, not only does Transactional Analysis attempt to assist staff in managing customer interactions 'in a positive manner', it is also deemed to provide a language for helping staff to help themselves; that is to turn themselves in to empowered human beings. According to B's Training Manager it is this self-producing aspect of Transactional Analysis that is highlighted to staff:

> the first thing they realise is that Transactional Analysis and customer care, or 'how to handle other people', is a *skill.* Its: 'my skill is being challenged here. Because I'm not stretching myself I'm not dealing with this customer the right way'. And once they realise it's a skill, and they can do something about it,

they take it on board. Its very much an empowering thing that way. If they have a customer who goes away still arguing then they've failed. The challenge is to turn the customer around and that's how the whole thing is sold [43].

The deployment of Transactional Analysis in customer care training is just one aspect of what senior management regard as a move towards a 'culture of learning', which means self-learning and self-development. The emphasis is upon individuals to develop and train themselves within structured programmes rather than being 'spoonfed'. So, for example, the training programme for shop floor-staff is structured in the form of a self-help manual. It is entirely up to them to generate the 'learning process' for themselves. Training progresses through three pre-determined stages, Bronze, Silver and Gold. On completion of the final module of each level, staff are examined by their branch manager to ensure they have reached the desired standard of competency. If they are successful, they receive a small salary increase and are then allowed to progress to the next stage of training. If they have not been successful, then they are directed to return to the manual once again. At Company B, the training process is entirely self-driven. As the introduction to the company's 'Induction Training Programme' makes clear

> We at B believe in a structured induction programme; but we don't believe in "spoonfeeding" new members of the team with endless facts and figures. We think that you should be in charge of your own training, so this induction programme is in the form of "SELF STUDY".
>
> Most people begin to doubt their capabilities when it comes to learning new things, or feel that they already have enough to cope with.
>
> Remember, when we rise to meet new challenges we increase our self respect and we definitely get a kick out of acquiring new skills and putting them into practice. We can proudly say "Look what I've done - I'm clever".

Studying helps us to learn new things. By studying we increase our knowledge and acquire new skills. So by working through the modules you will learn a great deal about yourself, the company and your new job.

Training at **B**, as this example illustrates, is inscribed with the presuppositions of the enterprising self. Self-learning is all about 'adding value' to oneself as a worker and as a person. As the Training Manager at **B** argued: 'I think you've got to be forever learning. Adding value to yourself at work and outside' [44].

Although there are a number of mechanisms being deployed at Company **A** to ensure the delivery of their Secure Shopping Strategy, as I indicated earlier, the centre piece of the company's strategy is the introduction of their Quality Team (QTs) programme. In a speech to staff launching the strategy in-store the Managing Director highlighted the introduction of QTs as the key to the future success of the business.

There are many exciting aspects to our Secure Shopping Strategy but I highlight in particular the introduction of Quality Teams into every area and department of the company which will allow all of you to become involved in a very real and meaningful way in changing some of the things we do for the better. I strongly believe that throughout this huge company amongst our staff there is an enormous wealth of talent, experience and skills that is not being allowed to be used fully. At last we will have a means of taking full advantage of that and I hope allow everyone to feel that they are contributing to our progress in a very positive way [45].

Quality Teams are **A**'s equivalent of Quality Circles. However, unlike some quality circle programmes, QTs are articulated as an integral component of **A**'s 'overall business strategy'; a mechanism that is intended to promote continuous business improvement. They are represented by senior management as the central technique by which the 'hearts and minds' of the company's workforce will be harnessed to the pursuit of business excellence. Quality

> to changing round the way we think of our front line troops. And throughout the company there is this recognition now that they have got a very major contribution to make. They know all the wrinkles. They actually know half the answers. And we're beginning to grow more and more aware that 75% of our problems are management driven, it maybe 90% for all I know. And actually staff have 90% of the answers: 'why are they doing it this way ? If only they'd listen to us'. So this Quality Team approach, I believe, is the beginning of the answer because its starting to say 'We need you. You've got talent. You know the wrinkles. Tell us and we, the managers, will listen to you...so we're in a way turning our managers - and management is about controlling and suppressing isn't it ? - into leaders. And leadership is about giving people countless opportunities to grow, to develop and contribute. But you don't do that overnight. That's ten years work [46].

Quality Teams have been established at each level and in each function of the business and now involve all members of the company (indeed membership of a QT is mandatory, not voluntary). The 'Senior' QT comprises the Board of Directors of Company A, and the 11-12 people sitting on that forum establish the overall strategic goals - the 'Whats' : What We Want to Achieve. These 'Whats' are then 'cascaded' down to the next level QT chaired by the line manager from the immediate 'Superior' QT. This QT then discusses the 'hows': how they will deliver the 'Whats' that have been established by the 'Superior' QT. The commitments made at this level are then cascaded down to the next 'Subordinate' QT and continue in the same fashion right down to the front-line QTs in-store, which are chaired by the branch manager.

As this brief outline suggests, QTs are 'very hierarchical'. They are not an alternative to line management, rather they 'simply involve everyone in analysing and achieving strategic objectives in a multi-level, multi-functional organization', and 'form a platform for the implementation of any major change in the future'.

In-store the Chair of the QT sets the agenda indicating the 'Whats' cascading down from the immediately superior QT. The Chair's role is to imperceptibly guide the meeting and certainly not to highjack it or dominate it, ensuring that everyone gets involved, that the group agrees to a series of 'Hows', and that everyone is personally committed to their implementation. In other words, the Chair must encourage the group to gel without appearing to be in control. Guidelines on managing QTs stress that 'self regulation is a key to motivation' and that 'self-monitoring is a key to commitment'.

QTs are sold to staff as a freedom package; as an opportunity to become more personally involved in the running of the business, and, simultaneously, to develop themselves as individuals. Emphasis is placed on getting staff to see the 'hows' formulated by the group as the result of their own autonomous deliberation; that they 'own' the QT process. 'Recognition and celebration of success' are also vital ingredients of the QT system.

> more and more now QTs are involving those front line people in making their contribution to the delivery of Secure Shopping. And you know as well as I do that if its your idea, you're much more committed to it than if I impose my ideas upon you. The obvious stuff, psychologically [47].

Through the technology of QTs, staff at A are encouraged to imagine they 'own' the business they work for. The psycho-therapeutic presuppositions that permeate the QT - self-monitoring as the key to commitment - structure it as a rational technology of the personal and interpersonal. Thus QTs can be seen to provide their members with an 'ethical' exercise, in Foucault's use of that term, aimed at producing a particular kind of relation to self, and, through this, the ethical demeanour and standing of a particular kind of person: the enterprising self. Here, once again, the onus on direct control is transformed into an emphasis on regulation through self-production. Via the technology of QTs the government of Company A comes to operate through the 'soul' of its individual employees.

concluding remarks

In this chapter I have attempted to indicate how people are made up at work by examining the changing rationality of government that is operative within certain multiple retailing organizations in the U.K.. I have argued that the internal world of the retail enterpise is being re-imagined through the discourse of Enterprise as one in which customers needs and desires are to be satisfied, productivity is to be enhanced, quality service guaranteed, flexibility enhanced and innovation fostered through the active engagement of the self-fulfilling impulses of all the organizations members.

Through a variety of technologies and practices, the programmatic aspirations of senior management personnel have been translated into new ways for people to be at work. Within these retailing organizations, store managers and shop-floor employees are increasingly conceptualised as enterprising subjects: that is as individuals who calculate about themselves and work upon themselves in order to better themselves; in other words, as people who live their lives as 'an enterprise of the self' (Rose, 1990; Gordon, 1987; 1991).

However, as I indicated earlier, 'making up' people at work is not simply a matter of 'labelling from above'. It is equally important to examine the behaviour of those so labelled to see what they make of and do with - how they 'consume'or 'use' - the representations and technologies to which they are subjected, and which they cannot keep at a distance. In the next chapter, therefore, I will contrast the 'strategic' rationality, to use de Certeau's terminology, of the 'labellers', with the 'tactics' of those so-labelled.

Figure 1.

Secure Shopping

Our Commitment

A Better Buy at A - Satisfaction Guaranteed

WELCOME... A assures you of a very warm welcome. Our staff want to treat you as a guest, making your visit happy, and leaving you with a wish to return.

QUALITY... Our Buyers are experts whose job is to examine products carefully, and require from our manufacturers just what we believe you would think to be the best quality for the money. Where necessary, we rigorously apply exacting Quality Assurance tests to ensure that our merchandise meets the standards we set. We do not sell any merchandise that we wouldn't be happy to use ourselves.

PRICE... We are constantly shopping the markets of the world, and we manufacture in our own factories, to bring you the value which cannot be beaten in your locality. We continually check our competitors to ensure that, for identical products, our prices are genuinely competitive. If you disagree, you have this assurance: you need only tell us, and we'll put it right for you.

SELECTION... In the ranges that we sell, we are confident that you will find what you want at **A.** As soon as fresh, new and exciting merchandise becomes available that meets our exacting standards - and yours - you will find it in our stores.

INFORMATION... At A you can learn all you want to know about the product you are interested in. We have knowledgeable staff. We are making our store layouts easier to follow, our merchandise displays easier to find and our signs and packaging easier to understand. All this will help you to be assured that you know before you buy.

GUARANTEES... It matters to us, as much as to you, that the product you buy from us performs fully to your requirements. If you aren't satisfied, please return with your sales receipt as soon as possible. We promise that we will do all that we can to put things right.

PEACE OF MIND... A's Secure Shopping has been designed to make it easier for you to get the things you need in life. **A's Secure Shopping** has been designed to take the worry out of shopping and put the pleasure back in.

Figure 2.

STRATEGY PAPER

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:

B's aim is to be the most exciting and successful young fashion retailer in the world.

Our success will be measured by our ability to profitably increase our share of the stated target market of 15-24 year old females in the UK. Additionally, international opportunities will be sought, researched, evaluated and progressed.

Increased market share will be achieved by identifying and fulfilling the wants and satisfactions of the stated target group in terms of:

Retail Environment

Product

Service

Notes

1. Quotes taken from an interview with the Personnel Director of a major British Department Store Group, December, 1989.

2. Quotes taken from an interview with the Personnel Director of a major British Department Store Group, December, 1989.

Details of the empirical research can be found in the Methodological Appendix.

3. Quote from a talk delivered by Paul Dowling, former Corporate Marketing Director, Asda Stores, to the Oxford Institute of Retail Management, 23/10/1987.

4. Quote from Bill McNamara, former Corporate Marketing Director of Asda, reported in *Retail Week* 09/03/1990, p.8.

5. Quote from a talk by Paul Dowling, former Corporate Marketing Director, Asda, Oxford Institute of Retail Management, 23/10/1987.

6. As the Personnel Director of one of Britain's leading mixed retailers - and an acknowledged 'retail engineer' - informed me, although the 'customer is king, it is often the City's perception that proves to be the big test of how well you're doing'. Interview with Personnel Director, Company A, 18/4/1990.

7. Nick Bubb, Executive Director, Morgan Stanley, writing in *Retail Week* 20/07/1990.

8. Christopher Hopton, Vice President, Bain & CO. (UK), *Retail Week* Conference Programme, March, 1991. p.6.

9. Interview with the Personnel Director, Company A, April 1990.

10. Interview with the Managing Director, Company B, July, 1990.

11. Acording to the Company's Personnel Director, for example, the level and content of training given to staff is directly related to the 'needs of the customer' as constructed by image study research.

we do a lot of image study work. We do a lot of independent market research work to see how the customer sees A in all its aspects from price to quality merchandise to service, and we have to continually respond to that and that is going to influence the training we provide so we will be using our resources, training them directly in a manner that best suits what the customers want, which we determine through image study.

12. Speech by Merchandising Director to all the company's store managers at the launch of the company's SSS, January, 1989. The speech was videoed and relayed to all staff later in the year when the strategy was launched in-store

It is interesting to note that A's competitive strategy - designed in part to indicate to an almost exclusively male City audience the 'rationality' and 'control' exhibited by the almost exclusively male senior management team at A - is articulated through the construction of a essentialist female 'personality' - friendly, caring, sympathetic, fashion conscious etc - exhibiting traits supposedly considered by men to connote the 'irrational', the 'emotional' and, hence, the 'uncontrolled'.

13. Interview with the Personnel Director, Company A, April, 1990.

14. Interview with the Personnel Director, Company A, April, 1990.

15. Interview with a Regional Controller, Company B, July, 1990.

16. Interview with the Retail Operations Director, Company **B**, July, 1990.

17. Quotes taken from Strategy Review Document, Company **B**, March, 1990.

18. Interview with a Regional Controller, Company **B**, July, 1990.

19. Interview with Personnel & Training Executive, Company **B**, July, 1990. As the Training Manager at Company **B** informed me

> Before the strategy everything was done very much in isolation. Training Officers would go off and do their research and write a training package. What they are now realising is that they ought to deliver what the customer wants in their training. So its a painful lesson they've learnt and they really learnt it through re-developing management induction. So its really persuading them to talk to Retail Operations - what do they want?; talk to the Area Managers - what do they say? Thats what happening now. It wasn't before. After they've done that its researching, checking it out, running pilots and then going live with it.

20. Interview with a Regional Controller, Company **B**, July, 1990.

21. Interview with Personnel and Training Manager, Company **B**, September, 1990.

22. Interview with an Area Manager, Company **B**, July, 1990.

23. Quote taken from the speech by the Merchandising Director at Company **A** at the launch of the Company's SSS, January 1989.

24. As the Personnel Executive of Company **D** - a leading mixed multiple retailer - informed me: the increasing size of contemporary multiple retail operations militates against the direct

supervision of service delivery in-store. It is just no longer feasible physically (let alone ethically) to sustain the scope of direct labour control systems.

> the business has grown enormously and the size factor alone actually means that you are left with no alteantive in the end. You have to delegate responsibility. You cannot manage everything yourself.

Interview with Personnel Executive Company **D**, October, 1990.

25. Interview with Secure Shopping Implementation Controller, Company **A**, May, 1990.

26. Interview with Secure Shopping Implementation Controller, Company **A**, May 1990.

27. Interview with the Personnel Director, Company **A**, April, 1990. As the Managing Director informed the company's branch managers at the launch of the SSS in 1989:

> Training is not just the function of training officers. It is the prime responsibility of every manager and every supervisor in the company. A manager is not a manager of things he (*sic*) is a manager of people. And better training does not require the injection of vast amounts of cash resource.

28. Interview with the Personnel Executive, Company, **D**, October, 1990.

29. Interview with the Personnel Executive, Company **D**, October, 1990.

30. For the Secure Shopping Implementation Controller at Company **A**, the benefits of adopting a Customer oriented culture of excellence were even more wide-ranging than this. He represented it as 'all part of making Britain better'.

31. Interview with the Human Resource Manager, Retail operations, Company C, January, 1991.

32. Interview with the Human Resource Manager, Retail Operations, Company C, January, 1991.

33. Interview with the Human Resource Manager, Retail Operations, Company C, January, 1991.

34. Interview with the Human Resource Manager, Retail Operations, Company C, January, 1991.

35. Interview with Human Resource Manager, Retail Operations, Company C, January, 1991.

36. As I noted earlier this 'merging' means that the relationship between government and the governed passes to an increasing extent through the manner in which governed individuals are willing to exist as subjects. As Laclau (1990: 67) argues:

> this means that in contemporary societies the (mythical) space of the subject is widened at the expense of structural objectivity.

37. 'W.H. Smith to retrain managers in motivation', *The Financial Times*, 08/05/1991 p.12. 'A good look at staffing', *Retail Week*, 19/04/1991 p.18. Similar developments are afoot in a number of other multiple retailers. See, for example, The Work Research Unit Case Study Report (1991), 'B&Q:"who cares wins"', London: ACAS.

38. 'In pursuit of excellence' , *Review - The Journal of The House of Fraser*, January/ February, 1989, Issue 11, p.61.

39. As Townley (1989: 92), for example, has argued the introduction of psychometric testing for lower level employees is indicative of an increasing concern amongst employers with the behavioural and attitudinal characteristics of employees as *individuals*. Company **B** is far from being the only multiple retail chain currently considering the introduction of such technologies for the recruitment of sales staff. At multiple DIY chain B&Q, for example, following a pilot study of psychometric testing in twenty-four new and old stores in the late 1980s', the company decided to apply these tests to all store applicants. Further details of B&Q's integrated human resource policy can be found in The Work Research Unit Case Study Report (1991) 'B&Q: "who cares wins"', London: ACAS.

40. Interview with Personnel &Training Controller, Company **B**, July, 1990.

42. Interview with Training Manager, Company **B**, September, 1990.

43. According to the Training Manager at Company B the success of Transactional Analysis in staff training depends upon the extent to which the discourse it provides them with 'becomes part of their everyday language...If they don't take it on board then it won't be successful'.

Interview with Training Manager, Company **B**, September, 1990.

44. Interview with Training Manager, Company **B**, September, 1990.

46. Excerpt from a video-relayed speech by the Managing Director to all the staff at Company **A**, 1989.

46. Interview with the Secure Shopping Implementation Controller, Company **A**, May, 1990.

47. Interview with Secure Shopping Implementation Controller, Company **A**, May, 1990.

chapter seven

assisted self-service - 'making up people' in retailing. II: 'tactics of consumption'

Introduction

In the previous chapter I attempted to show how certain categories of person are 'made up' at work in contemporary British retailing by examining the new rationality of government operative within the industry. I argued that the internal world of the retail enterprise is being re-imagined through the discourse of 'Enterprise' as a place where productivity is to be improved, customers' needs satisfied, quality service guaranteed, 'flexibility' enhanced and creative innovation fostered through the active engagement of the self-fulfilling impulses of all the organization's members. I suggested that through a variety of representations, technologies and practices the programmatic aspirations of senior management personnel within the retail industry were being translated into new ways for people to be at work. Increasingly, store managers and shop floor employees within the industry are conceptualised as 'enterprising' subjects: self-regulating, autonomous, productive individuals whose sense of self-worth and virtue is inextricably linked to the success of the company for which they work.

Following some suggestive remarks made by Ian Hacking(1986), this aspect of 'making up people' was described in terms of 'labelling from above': the discursive construction (by a 'community of experts') of a certain 'reality' that particular sorts of people are encouraged to make their own. However, in keeping with Hacking I also argued that there was more to making up people than the vector of 'labelling from above' alone. Equally important is 'the actual behaviour' of those so-labelled, that presses from below 'creating a reality that every expert must face'.

In this chapter I will be turning my attention to this second vector. Utilising insights from the work of Michel de Certeau I will consider what those so-labelled make of the technologies and representations to which they are subjected and which they cannot keep at a distance. I hope to show how people consume or 'use' these technologies and representations 'with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept' (de Certeau, 1984: xiii). By focusing upon the 'tactics' of those so-labelled it becomes possible, I

argue, to delineate the ways in which people remain '*other* within the very colonization' that assimilates them. As de Certeau suggests the logic of these 'tactics' of consumption serves to expose the limits of subjectification: 'labelling from above' never quite manages to get the measure of subjectivity, it is both excessive and inadequate. Hence the fundamental impossibility of government. In other words, because the vector of 'labelling from above' never manages fully to constitute itself as an objectivity its identity is dislocated. The very identity of 'labelling from above' depends upon a 'constitutive outside' - the second vector - which both denies that identity and provides the conditions of its possibility at one and the same time.

consumption, or usage: a reprise

In chapter three, I indicated that until comparatively recently the productionist bias inherent within much industrial sociology, particularly of a marxian kind, had led to the virtual neglect of the sphere and activity of consumption as objects worthy of serious and sustained analysis. The dominant representations of consumption circulating within this tradition tended to be remarkably bleak and deterministic - consumption was defined irrevocably by production; individual consumers were passive cultural dopes following to the letter of the law a text pre-written by Capital etc.

One of the great services performed by Cultural Studies, I argued, was its deconstruction of this 'mass culture critique'. In subcultural analysis, for example, consumption was represented as an active form of 'production' - a creative act of reappropriation and recontextualisation - by which various groups sought to 'resist' incorporation into the dominant order. So although producers inscribed dominant meanings into the commodities and texts they produced, these meanings were not automatically transferred into the psychic life of those consuming them. The meaning of commodified objects was not determined once and for all in the overarching sphere of production, no matter how clamorous and omniscient it may have become, but was also 'produced' in the use made of those objects by consumers in the practice of their everyday lives (Willis, 1990).

As I indicated, however, this rescuing of the sphere of consumption from the disdain and

denigration of the mass culture critique occurred at a cost. The re-focusing of attention upon the pleasures of, and play of identities within, contemporary cultures of consumption was founded upon a concomitant assumption that, somehow, the world of work and employment had already been accounted for. Indeed, while exploding the myth of the already determined, passive consumer, cultural analysis instituted in its place the myth of the totally determined, deskilled worker. A routinised, impoverished, deskilled world of paid work became the 'other' against which the 'pleasures of consumption' thesis constituted its identity [1].

I went on to argue that the work of Michel de Certeau (1984) offered a potentially fruitful way of conceptualising practices of 'consumption' , or 'usage', at work, as well as ouside of paid employment. Avoiding many of the 'banalities' (Morris, 1988) of contemporary Cultural Studies - the representation of almost every aspect of social practice as an act of 'creativity', 'resistance', or 'pleasure', for example, - de Certeau (1984: 29) points to the presence of 'enunciative' practices and 'tactical' techniques of 'consumption' within the economic sphere. '*La perruque*', for example, is an employee's own 'work' disguised as paid work for his or her own employer; a practice whereby a worker temporarily turns company time into his or her own time. According to de Certeau, this practice is the work-based version of an activity known outside the workplace (ie. in another *place*) as *bricolage*. In other words, 'La perruque' does not obey the 'law of the place', rather it traverses the boundaries of 'work' and 'leisure': 'the dividing line no longer falls between work and leisure. These two areas of activity flow together. They repeat and re-inforce each other'.

In stating this, de Certeau isn't simply referring to the sort of economic and cultural de-differentiation outlined by Jameson (1990) whereby the 'Corporate is now at one with Culture', (although this process can be seen to form an important part of his argument) rather he is interested in delineating the ways in which the practices of everyday life are never entirely captured by the ever-expanding grid of 'strategic' rationality: 'they traverse the frontiers dividing time, place, and type of action into one part assigned for work and another for leisure' (1984:29).

de Certeau, it needs to be remembered, deploys the term 'strategy' in a very particular way (though his use of the term contains strong echoes of Foucault's power/knowledge couplet) to

refer to

> the calculation of power relations that becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a business, an army, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a *place* that can be delimited as its *own* and serve as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats...can be managed. As in management, every "strategic" rationalization seeks first of all to distinguish its "own" place, that is the place of its own power and will, from an "environment". A Cartesian attitude...it is an effort to delimit one's own place in the world bewitched by the invisible powers of the Other (de Certeau, 1984: 35-36).

Thus, strategies involve a victory of place over time and a mastery of places through sight. In many ways, this 'strategic' rationality is equivalent to Hacking's vector of 'labelling from above'. 'Strategy' constructs, through the interplay of power and knowledge, a 'proper' place -a reality - that people caught within its grid are encouraged to make their own.

According to de Certeau (1984: xviii) the power of strategic calculation lies in its ability to divide, collate and classify, but it is precisely through this analytic fragmentation that it loses sight of what it claims to represent. In seeking to grasp the 'Real', strategy manages instead to construct a 'reality'. This reality only comes into being through a process of 'splitting', that generates a 'surplus' which, of necessity, must remain 'other'. For de Certeau the everyday is the space of the other. Of everyday practices, he argues (1984:20), strategies

> will retain only moveable elements (tools and products to put in display cases) or descriptive schemas (quantifiable behaviour, stereotypes of the staging of social intercourse, ritual structures), leaving aside the aspects of a society that cannot be uprooted and transferred to another space: ways of using things or words according to circumstances. Something essential is at work in this everyday historicity, which cannot be dissociated from the existence of subjects who are the agents and authors of conjunctural operations.

As the grid of strategic rationality appears everywhere 'clearer and more extensive', argues de Certeau, so it becomes ever more important to articulate the ways in which everyday practices expose the limits, and obstruct the operation of 'strategy'. By focusing upon 'procedures of consumption', he suggests, it is possible to see how people remain 'other' within the very colonization that assimilates them. Rather than accepting that 'assimilation' necessarily means 'becoming similar to' that to which one is subjected, de Certeau (1984:166) is interested in exploring the ways in which it can also mean 'making something similar to what one is, making it one's own, appropriating or re-appropriating it'.

Whereas strategy can count only *what* is used - it can only grasp the material used by consumer practices - it cannot fully grasp the *ways* of using deployed by consumers. The latter constitute the innumerable practices by means of which consumers re-appropriate the space occupied by 'techniques of production'. Consumption is a sort of production - a *poiesis* - but a hidden one 'because it is scattered over areas defined and occupied by systems of "production"', and because the increasing scope of these systems 'no longer leaves "consumers" any *place* in which they can indicate what they *make* or *do* with the products of these systems'. Consumption, in this reading, is devious, it is dispersed but it insinuates itself everywhere, silently and almost invisibly because it does not manifest itself through its own autonomous products or representations but only in relation to its ways of using representations 'from above' (de Certeau, 1984: xii-xiii).

As the invisible producers of their own paths through the occupied territory of the strategic, consumers trace, through their signifying practices, what de Certeau describes as 'lignes d'erre': wandering trajectories that form unforseeable routes, partly unreadable paths, across a 'proper' place. Although these trajectories are composed from 'the vocabularies of established languages', and remain 'subordinated to prescribed syntactical forms', they nonetheless 'trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the sytems in which they develop' (de Certeau, 1984: xviii).

In contrast to the 'strategic' rationality of 'systems of production', procedures of consumption are 'tactical' in character: habits of action and modes of operation that cannot

count on a 'proper' (a spatial or institutional localization) place, nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the strategic as a visible totality. The space of the tactic is the space of the other. As such it must play on a territory imposed upon it 'from above'.

> A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances. The "proper" is a victory of space over time. On the contrary, because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time - it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized "on the wing". Whatever it wins it cannot keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into "opportunities"' (de Certeau, 1984: xix).

Although tactics are 'an art of the weak' (though not of the 'unfree') - those without a 'proper' place - they indicate the very limits of strategic rationality, and of 'labelling from above'. Lodged within de Certeau's operational schema it is possible to detect a simple (and quite psychoanalytic), but not simplistic, moral: that the dynamics of subjectification are more complicated and contingent than simply identifying with the attributes, attitudes and behaviours prescribed by technologies and practices of regulation. The 'wandering trajectories' traced by consumers are neither determined nor captured by the systems of production within which they develop.

'The subject' (or the 'consumer') emerges as a result of the failure of objectivity in the process of its self constitution. Its emergence expresses the impossibility of the symbolic order ever realizing its full identity. In this sense the subject is 'antagonistic' - a hard kernel, or void, resisting symbolic integration/assimilation/dissolution (Laclau, 1990:17; Zizek, 1989;3; de Certeau, 1984: 18). The process of 'subjectification' or 'interpellation' can then be seen as an attempt to avoid, or to elude, this traumatic kernel, this fundamental impossibility, through identification - an attempt which, in the last resort, is doomed to failure.

In the following sections I draw selectively upon de Certeau's schema to examine the ways

in which certain categories of employee in particular retailing organizations 'use' the technologies and practices to which they are subjected and the consequences these 'tactics' of consumption have for the process of 'labelling from above'. I begin by examining how the establishment of 'Enterprise' as an 'objective presence' is founded upon an act of exclusion the traces of which cannot totally be eradicated.

"the crooked timber...": particular biographies, specific histories

introduction

In chapter three, I suggested that 'government' is eternally optimistic. The 'will to govern' is characterized by a stubborn belief that the 'Real' is programmable. Hence the perceived failure of one policy, set of policies, or complete 'paradigm' is always connected to attempts to devise or propose programmes that would 'work better'. As I indicated in chapter two, the discourse of 'Enterprise' announces itself as a 'revolution' in opposition to previous failed forms of governmental endeavour and as the herald of a more transparent, organic and unified society. It demands a clean break with the past in order to guarantee a future that does indeed 'work better'. In so doing, it tends to forget its origins, to eradicate its initial contingency, and thus to objectify itself. In other words, in order to constitute itself as an objectivity it must break with its own conditions of emergence and instead suppose it has its own 'place' from which it can reflect upon the world and programme 'reality'. It must appear to be beyond the exigencies of the everyday, looking down from above, enjoying a 'god's eye view'.

'Enterprise', like other dominant discourses prefers a *tabula rasa* on which to write its compositions 'from above'. According to the Managing Director of Company B, for example, the organization was in the embryonic stages of a 'total cultural change', with 'no precedent' in anything the company had ever attempted before. It was essential, he argued, that the company 'start with a clean slate...otherwise there's no guarantee of success'. Ideally, he would like to have seen all current sales staff removed from their positions and replaced by completely new

recruits better able to fit the company's 'culture of excellence'. He felt that many of the people currently in post simply 'weren't up to it' ; that they would not be able to deliver the 'excellent customer service' envisaged in the company's 'strategy' [2].

In so far as the discourse of Enterprise, or Excellence, takes hold within an organization - becomes 'instituted' as it appears to have done in Company **B** - then the system of possible alternatives to that discourse tend to vanish and the traces of its contingent conditions of possibility to fade. There was a very strong feeling expressed by most of the senior managers interviewed in Company **B** that, love it or not, there really was no alternative to 'the strategy' and its programme of 'total cultural change'. As I indicated in the previous chapter, senior staff talked of '*having* to learn a new language' and of developing a new 'mindset'. For these employees the success of the company and their own personal occupational status and future career progression were intimately interwoven. Being able to 'speak the language' of Enterprise thus became an overwhelming *political* necessity for senior staff as well as an ostensibly 'objective' prerequisite for the continued success of the business. Those senior managers who could not, or would not, learn the language were quickly identified as 'not having what it takes' and, in some cases, were duly informed that their services were no longer required [3].

However, if the establishment of objectivity is based on exclusion, the traces of that exclusion will always somehow be present. As de Certeau (1984: 48) indicates 'beneath what one might call the "monotheistic" privilege that panoptic apparatuses have won for themselves, a "polytheism" of scattered practices survives, dominated but not erased by the triumphal success of one of their number'. The presence of these scattered practices attests to the impossibility of abolishing antagonism, of creating the happy relation the society/organization would like to have with itself. These scattered practices - de Certeau's 'tactics' - are the leftover, the surplus separating the Real from its symbolization. They are, in other words, the space of the subject.

Although Enterprise *prefers* a *tabula rasa* upon which to write its compositions it actually seeks to inscribe itself upon persons with *particular biographies* and upon organizations with *specific histories*. We will examine each of these in turn.

As I indicated in the previous chapter, the power of Enterprise lies in its apparent

universality - in its ability to offer a standard benchmark by which all of life can be judged and, thus, a means of aligning seemingly opposed modes of existence. However, it applies this benchmark to human material which is already highly differentiated along the lines of gender, ethnicity, class, generation and so on. Or, to put it another way, the site of the subject is positioned by a variety of often competing discourses. What cannot be determined in advance are the articulations that may result from the encounter of these discourses. In negotiating this encounter a result may be produced which was unanticipated by either of the contributing discourses.

particular biographies

In company A's London Flagship store, for example, 'generation' proved to be a crucial structuring device in explaining competing interpretations of the Secure Shopping Strategy (SSS). For the store's middle-aged, male senior sales manager (DM) the SSS was interpreted as another stage in the steady removal of skill from his job and its transference into 'the hands of the accountants at Head Office'. DM had joined the company over thirty years earlier 'with no formal education', when 'loyalty' and the gradual acquisition of 'shop-floor common sense' were represented as prime virtues, and had worked his way up from 'the lowest form of sales assistant' to deputy manager in one of the company's top stores. For him the SSS signified another nail in the coffin of his dearly beloved 'art of retailing' and a further erosion in the status and skill associated with his job. Rather than interpreting the advent of the SSS as an opportunity to feel increased ownership of his store, DM viewed it as another step in a gradual process of deskilling which was destroying any opportunity for involvement and decision-making at local level.

> This year, for the first time, I am not involved in agency review. Now agency review is where we analyse how everyone of my agencies (*the concessions that trade in A's stores*) have done, whether we should give them more space or less space. And I have direct control over my department as to what is going to happen

by talking it through with my manager and my area manager. We will talk it through and come to a decision. Now I am paid on, and judged by, the results I bring in so I should have one hundred per cent control of what's going on downstairs, within the constraints the company puts on me. Now this year someone else from head office, who doesn't even know the store is doing my agency review for me. To me that is absolutely ludicrous. I don't care who they are, they can't come to the right conclusions until they have had an interview with me. And that is not happening. And to my mind that is demotivating. I feel as if I might as well not be here. I've been put into another constraint as well. I get a list down from head office saying this will go here, that will go there. And they don't even know the shop. Now that's fine, if that's the way thay want to do it, but what price loyalty?...Loyalty in the company used to be very good. They used to recognise loyalty. You used to be somebody, now you're just a number...Why should I be loyal to my company when they can't be loyal to me? They recognise I'm the expert. They turn round and tell me I'm the expert, and yet I'm not allowed to do what I want to do on my own shopfloor...Basically, we're not allowed to think anymore. It's being controlled from Head Office. This is how I see the future of A. Everything will be controlled from Head Office. The direct buying will be done at Head Office. The directions will be coming from Head Office. There will be no deviating at all from Head Office. It doesn't matter whether you are London, Penzance or Edinburgh, it doesn't really matter providing you get a good average. Not that you're going to shine. You can't shine in that environment. All you can do is carry out the company policy. If you carry out the company policy and keep your nose clean, that's all they really want. But that's not loyalty, that's very demotivating [4].

For DM 'Enterprise' was experienced as a debilitating constraint in opposition to a lived past within the company which, at least retroactively, appeared to him to have offered a significant sense of work-based identity. Rather than creating and sustaining a sense of individual commitment and loyalty to A, 'Enterprise' directly assaulted an already established

sense of identification with his work and with the company. The historic importance of 'shop-floor common sense', of a practical and local knowledge had given way to the centralising expertise of 'graduates with no experience in-store' at Head office with 'their computers'.

> Because they are educated people 'paper' means a lot to them. Now for a practical person like myself, with little formal education, 'paper' means very little or nothing to me. I mean I get printouts from the EPoS, I read them and I think, I could have told you that, I knew that, before I even read the printout. I don't need that to tell me. I know how much I've sold of any of my goods the night I went home, not the next day when it was printed out and given to me. I make it my business to find out. If anybody's on the ball, that's what they know. EPoS is very good, it gives me lots of information and I use it. But its not the b-all and end-all for me...I'm at the age, you can tell that by the way I'm talking and what I've said, where computers don't mean a lot to me. But they will mean a lot to the new people coming up. It's got to. But relying on machines to do the job for you isn't the same as shop-floor common sense [5].

According to DM the tenets of 'Enterprise' stood in opposition to everything he valued dear at A. However, his portrait of 'the way things were' found little resonance in the aspirations of the other departmental managers in the store - either male or female - all of whom were significantly younger than him, and most of whom were only in their early twenties. They had no experience of the idealized version of work DM elaborated, nor had they grasped it as an ideal meaning to aim for themselves. They were effectively inside 'Enterprise' and it was all they had to work with.

> A has obviously changed. It used to be more paternalistic, but I never knew it then. I wasn't with A then so it really doesn't relate to me. So I can see what DM means when he says "years ago they used to do this and that" but then again that's years ago and now everything is more geared specifically towards profits and

things like that. And I don't think that's a bad thing. I suppose that's what counts. That's what we want [6].

This is not to say that all the departmental managers 'loved' the way A was changing. There was, for example, a distinct differentiation in perspective within the younger management group between those who had joined the company straight from school and who had worked their way into lower management positions, and those who had joined as graduates - both specialists and generalists. The latter tended to have more direct contact with Head Office in terms of induction and training, for example, and, therefore, saw themselves as being more 'strategic in outlook' than their store-based, non-graduate colleagues. They represented themselves as being privy to 'the big view' - as having a more 'objective' take on the company's goals and objectives - than their other colleagues who they viewed as more 'emotionally involved' with the day-to-day activities of their own particular store, and hence somewhat blinkered to the 'wider' issues at stake in the process of organizational change. In other words, the graduates saw themselves as 'cosmopolitans' in contrast to their non-graduate contemporaries whom they defined as 'locals' (Gouldner, 1957).

specific histories

As the above example makes clear, 'Enterprise' not only acts upon persons with particular biographies but also upon organizations with specific histories. Whilst 'Enterprise' calls for a 'management revolution' (Peters, 1987) - a fresh start, as it were - and projects the vision of a cohesive but inherently flexible organization, work relations in companies like A and most other modern retailing corporations, *already* involve the differentiation and 'fracturing' of collections of employees (managers as well as workers).

In company A, for example, managerial career progression has been intimately linked, historically, to the possession of a particular professional qualification (obtained only at degree level in universities and polytechnics). Because A's core business necessitates the perpetual presence of at least two Professional employees in-store to deal with customers, and because the Society to which these Professionals belong has historically been able to negotiate

significant remuneration for its members, A has a policy of recruiting these Professionals as management trainees as well as purveyors of their own particular specialism. Thus, nearly every store manager at A and almost every deputy manager (DM was an exception), is also a Professional. As a result of this policy Professionals exercise a virtual monopoly over the senior positions within the company, whether at District, Area or Head Office level, or in the marketing, personnel , or training functions.

This 'structural' elision of Professional qualification and career progression has led to the virtual disintegration of an internal labour market for those employees who do not posess the appropriate Professional training. Those who have worked their way up the ranks to the level of sales manager, and even those on the company's new non-professionalist graduate training scheme, are therefore highly unlikely to be able to further their line management careers at A beyond branch level.

Senior executives at A (themselves members of the Professional elite) are very aware of the potential problems that this elemental division poses for the cultural reconstruction of A (and the new generalist graduate scheme is partly a response to this). However, they argue that it is not financially viable for the company to employ both a Professional and a general manager in the same store. It's either one or the other. And as the former is a structural feature of the company's core business it makes sense to train him or her for management as well as Professional service.

Nonetheless, despite the best efforts of senior management to play down the importance of this two tier system, a symbolic division has emerged around this central fracturing between the 'Professional mafia' and the 'rest', as the following comments from two of the Company's Central London Training and Personnel staff indicate.

There are two different career structures within this company. Theres a structure for Professionals, and there's a structure for 'others'. And in the Professional's structure people are able to get into what I see as more senior positions than people who are non-professionals. For example, I'm an Assistant Area Training Officer. My next promotion will be to Area Training Officer. The position above that is

Area Training and Development manager and for that you have to be a Professional. So there is no way I can go any further than Area Training Officer...My promotion prospects are limited by not being a Professional and I feel that is unfair....We have some non-Professionals as store managers in central London, in particular we have a female non-professional store manager, and I think that's terrific. I think that's a major achievement in the company. But where she goes from there, I don't know. Because she could easily manage a larger store but will it be economically viable to do so as a non-Professional because the company always needs Professional cover? The other danger is that people at a supervisory level in the company see no way forward [8].

There is a very, very, very large rift between sales managers and Professionals. And that's simply because of financial reasons. When Professionals are recruited they are very expensive to employ. A newly qualified Professional would be on about £15,-16,000 whereas as a sales manager with loads of experience would be on about £13,-14,000 maximum. And the Professionals potential to earn is far, far greater than that of the sales manager. And purely for financial reasons a lot of sales managers will never become store managers, because it is not economical to employ a Professional and a store manager. Its one or the other. Traditionally the Professionals have been recruited to be geared up for management of stores. Non-Professionals will never be store managers...Last year (1989) was the first year they launched the graduate training scheme for non-Professionals, a sort of general management training course. We've got one here, a general management trainee, and he does have a future in the company, but a much more limited one then if he'd done his degree in the Professional subject. Its stupid. Its being totally unrealistic in today's market. And because you've got your Professional qualification doesn't mean you will be a good manager...Its just a tradition of the company. If you look at head office, most of the top jobs are controlled by Professionals. The majority at Head Office are Professionals, and its very Professional biased, even in Personnel. You get to a certain level and its all Professionals. Though how the hell you change

> from a whole life in that Profession and at the last minute change to personnel I really don't know [9].

For many sales managers, for example, the dominance of the 'Professional mafia' means that they have effectively reached the limits of their line management career at A. Most see themselves as committed to a career in A and as 'enterprising' managers - self-regulating, autonomous, 'go-getting', productive individuals whose sense of self-worth is intimately bound up with the successful effectuation of their work. However, career opportunities with increased personal responsibility and financial remuneration are central tenets of their interpretation of the 'discourse of Enterprise', and they now believe that A is no longer willing, or able, to offer them that. For one sales manager who had joined the company only four years earlier as a sales assistant and who had been promoted six times since then, this central fracturing was taking its toll on her sense of identification with her work and with the company. After two years in the same job, and having turned her department into the most profitable in-store within only one year of arriving, she now felt bored and in need of a fresh challenge.

> I don't think I can give it one hundred per cent commitment. I am committed and I am motivating myself but I can see it myself, and I'll be honest, that my standards a year ago are not my standards now. Whereas before I'd say "I'm going to do that now", now I'll say "It can wait til' tommorrow". If I could see a future here I'd still be going for it. I think I've got a lot to offer A, definitely, but they're just not going to exploit that [10].

As Salaman (1986:73) has argued, for example, the social patterns arising from these forms of 'fracturing' within work organizations 'consist of social groupings of inclusion snd exclusion', or, to deploy Chantal Mouffe's term (derived from Carl Schmitt, 1991: 6), 'friend-enemy relations'. These groupings always involve the construction of an 'us' whose identity is only constituted in relation to a 'not us', or 'them'.

However, as the above examples indicate, such groupings do not develop solely or necessarily around the traditionally privileged site of management/worker relations. Rather these groupings are multiple, often seemingly contradictory to outside observers, and liable to constant realignment . As a sales assistant at company B suggested, 'its not just one "us" and "them", there's loads of "us's" and "them's" in this store'[11]. These 'friend-enemy relations' cannot easily be domesticated because they derive their energy from the most diverse sources, many emanating from outside the arena of the workplace. Friend-enemy relations in contemporary retail organizations can, and often do, develop between customers and sales assistants, management and staff, local branch staff and Head Office staff, between white and black staff, Afro-caribbean and asian staff, between different departments in-store, and between full and part-time staff, with coalitions between these and other groupings frequently shifting depending upon circumstances.

At Company A's flagship London store, for example, one of the largest department's was staffed almost entirely by black, predominantly African-born, women at sales assistant level (apart from one black female supervisor all the departmental management team were white). Although the Personnel Officer denied that 'colour' played a part in the departmental staff allocation process, it was noticeable that those departments with the lowest status ratings amongst staff were those with the largest number of black people working on them [12]. However, through crowding these women together in one department a strong sense of identity had been established around ethnicity, in direct opposition to the english speaking white dominance of other departments. In the canteen for example, alongside the 'management table' and 'concessions girls' table' was the 'Africans' table'. According to one of the sales assistants on the department - a British-born black woman who did not see herself first and foremost in terms of 'being black', and was therefore regarded by her departmental colleagues as 'not really black' - the african women tended 'to speak their own language' on the shopfloor. They did this, she suggested, so that outsiders - including non-black colleagues and customers, as well as management - couldn't understand what they were saying to each other and, thus, be privy to the group's dynamics in any way, shape or form. As this woman indicated, the strong collective spirit in the department articulated around ethnicity constituted its identity in direct oppostion to the individualising discourse of 'Enterprise' projected by the

company.

> Everything's black. Black men, black clothes. Everything is black oriented. Nothing. Nothing but black...people tend to see them as a group and not as individuals at all. If one of them gets promoted its not seen as an individual thing. They have a big celebration and see it as a black thing: one of the black's got promoted. Its like a rally round thing...Like one of the Ghanian girls got sacked 'cause she was rude to a customer and it almost caused a riot. Things got really heavy in the department [13].

Through an unacknowledged process of discrimination - allocating black women who were deemed 'not to communicate well' to a low status department where personal interaction between shop-floor staff and customers was less likely to occur - 'white' management at the store inadvertantly created the conditions of possibility for the emergence of a highly charged 'friend-enemy' grouping. The department developed an identity that was constituted in direct opposition to both 'being white' and 'being management'.

At Company **B**'s flagship store in the west end of London, similar dynamics were at work on the shop-floor. Although **B**'s sales staff acknowledged that 'the asian girls tend to stick together, the black girls tend to stick together, and the white girls tend to stick together', these various shop-floor groupings were united in their detestation of another 'community' on the shop-floor, the agency staff (themselves highly differentiated by gender, ethnicity and so forth) who ran the various private concessions in-store. Whereas **B**'s own shop-floor staff were contractually obliged to wear (a universally detested) company uniform, concessions staff could wear their own clothes at work. This highly visible embodiment of individual choice and expression - establishing an obvious connection between work and non-work identity - was a symbol, for concessions staff, of their superiority to and difference from **B**'s own staff (**B**'s management staff were the only other employees allowed to wear clothes they had chosen themselves), and a source of great frustration and annoyance to **B**'s sales assistants

And then there's concessions. They tend to stick together and not get on with any other area of the shop. They sit on their own and everybody hates them. There's no integration. They themselves don't wear the uniform so they feel themselves to be that little bit better and that creates a real animosity on both sides. And that can affect the way the shop runs to a degree. Say, for example, with the concessions dressing room. They'll never bring out our area's stuff and put it out or give it to us. They'll only bring out their own stuff. And if you take stuff over to them that isn't theirs they get all aggressive. They hate sharing a dressing room with us 'cause they think that brings them down to our level and they don't like that at all. It doesn't affect the customers this tension, so it doesn't hurt the profits. But every now and again the changing room has to be shut because they've allowed too many clothes to get piled up in there and that can cause aggravation for the customer...its just the way it is, and you do notice it. You say "Oh! I'm not going over to that crowd, you know what they're like" [14].

Again, this social patterning of 'similarity versus difference' - or 'friend-enemy' - was largely inadvertant - an unforeseen consequence of formal structure and process. The strategic objectives of providing a 'total' look for **B**'s sales staff through the adoption of a company uniform, as well as of highlighting the choice and range available at **B**'s stores through the deployment of concessions outlets on the shop-floor, led not to the development of an organic complementarity as envisaged but to the creation of a virulent 'friend-enemy' grouping. However, while the *structure* of the grouping emerged as an unforeseen consequence of 'social engineering' by senior management at **B** and was therefore firmly 'work-based', the substance of the conflict between sales staff and concessions staff traversed the boundaries of 'work' and 'leisure'. For **B**'s sales staff, concessions became the ememy through being allowed to wear their own clothes at work. In other words, concessions staff were permitted to express their individuality as non-workers visually *at the workplace*. In contrast, **B**'s own employees felt denied this connection between work and non-work. Instead their individuality was denied through having to wear a uniform that they had no hand in selecting themselves.

In this section I indicated that far from writing its compositions from above on a *tabula*

rasa, 'Enterprise' acts upon an 'always already' split and differentiated human material, and upon organizations where the structuring of work relations, for example, involves the differentiation and fracturing of collections of employees around which 'friend-enemy' groupings inadvertantly develop.

As the examples deployed above indicate, although the establishment of Enterpise as an 'objective presence' by senior management at Company A and Company B involves the 'monotheistic' privileging of this discourse, the traces of other discourses survive, lying in layers, 'hidden in customs, rites and spatial practices' within these organizations. As de Certeau (1984; 200 - 201) suggests it is through these traces or 'scattered practices' 'that an uncodeable difference insinuates itself into the happy relation the system would like to have with itself'.

However, while these 'scattered practices' may serve to delineate the limits of 'labelling from above', there is still a need to show how they differentially enable those involved in them to 'manipulate events in order to turn them into "opportunities"' (de Certeau, 1984: xix). In the following section, I turn to look in greater detail at how different categories of employee in particular retail organizations 'use' the technologies and practices to which they are subjected to differing effect.

"they're bloody nomads": tactical trajectories in retailing

As de Certeau (1984: xvii) makes clear, whilst 'marginality' is no longer limited to minority groups - in the sense that most people no longer have any place in which they can indicate what they make or do with representations from above - it is still important to realise that this emergent 'silent majority' (Baudrillard, 1988) is not homogeneous in its composition. Rather, 'tactics' are related to 'social situations and power relationships'. For Yudice (1989: 216-217) it is apparent that 'popular tactics' are wielded not only by the lowliest of workers but also by all employees within any organization. It therefore becomes important to distinguish among the practitioners in terms of how the tactics they deploy enable them to create space for themselves; 'otherwise these generalized "diversionary tactics" obliterate the specificity of the

motives for which they are employed'.

"this is my stock, in my shop" : managerial tactics in retailing

In the previous chapter, I indicated that the discourse of Enterprise envisages a coherent, purely economic method of programming the totality of governmental action. Attempts to create an 'Enterprise Culture' within contemporary business organizations, as well as within the wider social arena, have proceeded through the progressive enlargement of the territory of the market by a series of re-definitions of its object.

Although a number of critics (Armstrong, 1989; Guest, 1989; Legge, 1989) have sought to highlight an apparent contradiction at the heart of the discourse of Enterprise between, on the one hand, its advocation of an increasing role for management accounting frameworks, and, on the other, the priority it accords to the self-steering and self-actualising capacities of individuals, I suggested that Enterprise brooks no opposition between the two. Rather, under the regime of Enterprise 'totalisation' and 'individualisation' (Foucault, 1988) proceed hand in hand, mutually re-inforcing one another.

In both Company **A** and Company **B**, for example, store managers have experienced the effects of both an increasing centralisation of control - with Head Office staff exerting greater influence over the selection and presentation of stock in store - and a parallel increase in their own individual responsibility for the financial management and performance of their branches. In other words, at the same time as Head Office exerts greater control over individual branches, store managers are also subjected to greater individual accountability through, for example, becoming designated budget holders and by taking responsibility for the personnel and training function in-store. This autonomisation and responsibilisation of store management staff has rendered them more visible to the 'strategic' gaze of Head Office while simultaneously encouraging them to view this 'gaze of the Other' as their own - to become at one with it.

For most store managers at **A** and **B** the institution of Enterprise had involved both an intensification of effort and a rationalization of resources - human as well as financial - at branch level. However, while the meanings inscribed within these developments by senior

management stressed their liberating, self-fulfilling character for individual managers and excluded any reference to their possible constraining or debilitating effects, they have not been so unambiguously interpreted by those at whom they are aimed.

Rather than describing their situation as one of 'thriving on chaos' most store managers talked instead of 'just managing'.

I can say now that there are managers in this area who will today be working eleven to twelve hour days. And if they were to say "No! sorry, I'm not doing it", they won't say it 'cause they know if they do say it their careers are finished. They know it, the Area Manager knows it, everybody knows it. Basically, you either cope with the pressure or you're out, and I think that's grossly unfair. And I think its feasible that we're in a situation where people are frightened to actually make a fuss about it. So people like the Area Manager, who to be fair to them, can't go to their Director and say "I'm overspent on salaries" because he wants to get on as well, so he starves his area of...staff and thats the situation we've got into...I find that I personally have had enough of it. I've had enough of finishing here at 7pm, getting home at 8pm, and then leaving home at 5am to get in here for earlies, which means I'm going to be damned tired when I come in to work tommorrow. I've had enough of that...most of last year we didn't have a porter which means that I've had to come in and pull all the trays around in the morning and do all the dirty jobs, and I've had enough of all that. The only reason I haven't gone is that there aren't enough moves for managers. And I think there is a thing in the company that if I were to say I would like a store outside London, that I wouldn't mind a sideways move, people would say "Why ?" and "He's not the man we thought he was". So I daren't. I daren't say the one thing which I really feel, and which frankly would be in the company's best interests...But I daren't say the one thing I would want to...I slept hardly at all last night. I knew that today we'd be very short of staff...And I thought "I'm going to be the only person left tonight who can cash up the tills" and I wanted to get home to watch the football at 8pm. So I stayed awake all night

fretting about it [15]

For many store managers at both **A** and **B** the demands of Enterpise were experienced as all-consuming. It was not at all unusual for managers to have to come into their branches seven days a week just to cope with the operational basics. Moreover, friends and family were regularly recruited on an un-paid basis, to help out with various urgent tasks they couldn't cope with on their own and couldn't afford to pay staff overtime to perform. Although most managers continued to argue that work was not their life they were aware that company related business was increasingly colonizing their existence.

> I've had to come in here on sundays to work, often for totally crazy reasons like putting together a new cash desk and putting it out on the floor. Things that they just won't pay to be done by Maintenance or whatever. It wasn't just me that came in it was my boyfriend who came in too. He's the one who sawed down the cash desk and made sure it was the right height and that. He goes absolutely ape-shit when I ask him to come in, but you see the thing is I get so upset when its not done, because I feel personally responsible...so my boyfriend came in and did the job with his brother-in-law on a Sunday, for no money. He wasn't too happy about it. He had a quiet life after it though 'cause the whole thing was getting me so tensed up. Every time my Area manager came down she'd ask why there was a new cash desk out the back and why wasn't it on the floor. And I said I hadn't had time to do it. They weren't aggressively judging me on it but I kept thinking they were judging me on it so it just became something that *had* to be done. It drove me barmy, so I asked my boyfriend...Actually, he's been in to do loads of things for me. He's put the fitting room curtains up, he's painted departmental panels for me. He always goes loopy but I say "Oh please! I've got to do it" [16].

As both of the above examples indicate, store managers were structurally locked into the institution of Enterprise within their companies. In order to guarantee their future they had to cope with the pressures thrust upon them in the name of the 'enterprising self'. Failure to keep

up could easily result in dismissal, the blame falling squarely upon the victims themselves for not being enterprising enough - for not exhibiting the requisite virtues of individual initiative, self-reliance and so forth. Basically, the company's view was if individual managers could not cope then it was because they were not using their management skills effectively.

> The company goes on about people's time management skills. If you can't get it done within your allotted time then its your fault because your time management skills weren't right [17].

Although many store managers were prepared to admit that they were finding the pressures of increased individual accountability extremely debilitating they did simultaneously testify to an intense sense of 'ownership' of their own stores.

> Whatever happens in the shop I take very personally. This is *my* stock in *my* shop. They do encourage you to feel a sense of ownership. They have a share scheme. You're also rewarded on your bonus sytems. You're rewarded on what you do in your shop, not on what happens in your area. I mean you do tend to think of them as your own shops [18].

> I actually feel that this is *my* shop. It's not B's shop its *mine*. And I want it to take money, and I want it to look good. I don't know, but I think you feel personally responsible for what happens, and the way that it's run, and the way that it appears. And you feel personally injured if someone says "Isn't this shop a mess!". You know it really gets to you. I don't know. You feel so emotionally involved with the way its going. And I know that other people in the company, not just managers, but the buying department, the accounts department, area managers, they put in as much time and extra time as we do as branch managers. So I think its not just me, everyone's in the same boat sort of thing, so I don't feel bad about doing it. I don't feel like I'm being put upon because I know everyone else is being put upon too [19].

While this sense of 'ownership' appears indicative of the total assimilation of store managers to the logic of the strategic gaze, most managers interpeted their 'ownership' of the store rather differently. 'Ownership' meant making the store their own, *appropriating* it to their own purposes, rather than simply being transparent cyphers for the will of Head Office.

At company **B**, for example, branch telephones were not always effectively budgetted for so that they could often be used pretty much at will. Store managers at **B** saw their phones as one of the privileges of the job and used them both as a vital 'political' resource for keeping in contact with friends and colleagues in other branches - 'the grapevine' - and as a way of 'personalising' the workplace - partners, friends and relatives were contacted for free from work thus turning company time (and money) into time of one's own.

> I make personal calls all the time. I tend to think of the phone as one of the few privileges a manager gets. I mean I don't let the staff use it without asking me but if they do I don't mind, if they want to phone their boyfriends or whatever. One of the few privileges of being a manager is being able to use the phone during the daytime for whatever you want, to speak to whoever you want to speak to [20].

Another way in which managers represented their 'ownership' of the store was through transforming it into an extension of their own homes. Branches located in shopping centres or high streets often became sites where social relations originating outside of the workplace were reproduced. Friends 'popped in' while out shopping, and managers often invited them in to their office 'for a chat' in much the same way as they would if they were at home. In this sense the individual retail outlet tends to be much more easily appropriated for the purposes of non-work activity than most conventional office spaces ever could be. Rather than simply encouraging the progessive penetration of the market into all areas of social and cultural life, there is also a certain sense then in which the structure and geography of the retail industry allows the socialisation and culturalisation of market relations within its own borders [21].

At one Company **B** store, the branch manager's sense of 'ownership' had led her to

deliberately subvert the intent of the company's 'self-help' training manual. As I indicated in the last chapter (pp.197-198), B's new training programme had been designed to place the burden of in-store training upon shop-floor staff and their managers, rather than upon central resources. The idea was to jettison what senior management termed 'spoonfeeding' and to encourage individual responsibility for self advancement. However, as this branch manager indicated, the pressure of running a store with an inadequate staffing resource left neither sales employees nor management with time to concentrate upon the training programme. Instead of placing the burden on staff to put themselves through the training programme - from Bronze, to Silver and Gold - in their own time, as the company suggested they should, this manager simply completed all the requisite administration over a plausible, if comparatively short period and sent it back to Head Office indicating that all her staff had now achieved the Gold standard of competence. This had the effect of creating some space for the manager with respect to Head Office training demands, and of providing a salary increase for staff without them having to do any extra work, thus improving the morale of the shop as whole. As this manager argued,

> Head Office don't have realistic expectations. I don't think you can expect an ordinary member of staff whose on a pittance and working all hours to take stuff home and work on training at home. Why should they ? I wouldn't do it ! [22].

Without being able to 'keep it at a distance' this manager 'used' the company training programme for ends far removed from those inscribed within it by its makers. In this instance, what might be described as the categorical imperative of the enterprising self - 'manage yourself to your own best advantage' - was utilised to open up a temporary space between the self-fulfilling impulses of the individual employee and the goals of the company, *while appearing to further align them.*

However, this form of 'putting one over' was invariably a *matter of 'private morality'.* If such tactics were to confront explicitly and publically the power of strategic calculation - if they were to become 'visible' - then they would soon be declared 'irrational' and steps would be taken to eradicate or colonize them. Managers knew this and were therefore careful not to

trespass too far. Thus, at **B** - in keeping with the prescriptions of Peters & Waterman (1982: 218) and other proponents of 'Excellence' - 'autonomy' was defined as obedience to the core values of the Corporate Culture. This had the effect of tightly circumscribing the meaning of freedom and autonomy within the organization and of excluding alternative conceptions and, of course, their advocates.

Nonetheless, within these symbolic boundaries it was quite possible for store managers at **B** to cultivate a visible enterprising demeanour while at the same time creating space for themselves. More often than not, however, store managers' ability to 'have their cake and eat it' [23] was established at the expense of those beneath them in the organizational hierarchy. In other words, store managers were able to 'use' their own staff in such a way as to simultaneously progress their own formal organizational career and create space for themselves at the workplace.

"the brilliant ally of your own gravediggers": managerial tactics and power relations in-store

At company **B**, the store managers' most likely to achieve swift career progression were those whose behaviour most fully - i.e. visibly - accorded with the values and meanings inscribed within the corporate culture. However, the competition for advancement within **B** was intense, and the calculated cultivation of a visible 'Enterprising' demeanour not only required managers to align themselves fully with the strategic gaze but also to differentiate themselves from one another.

Some managers attempted to indicate their individual 'distinction' by deliberately understaffing their stores in order to come in under budget. This practice had the effect of signalling to Area Managers and to Head Office that the manager in question was 'one of them', a virtuous 'enterprising' person who could be trusted to act in **B**'s best interests. At the same time, however, it also helped to establish new financial norms throughout the organization to which all branches were then expected to comply. In other words, the political struggle for individual distinction amongst ambitious branch managers led to the intensification of work in *all* the company's stores .

One highly ambitious young store manager at **B** had understaffed her store to such an extent that she was forced to come in to work seven days a week for over three months in order to cope with the workload, making herself ill in the process. However, she had few regrets.

> Yeah, its detrimental to your welfare. And at the end of the day a couple of months ago I was like "what am I doing here?" and "why am I bothering ? I'm not achieving, I'm not enjoying myself and I'm working myself to the bone". I really was making myself really ill. I was still coming in but I wasn't eating and I wasn't sleeping. Its not a case of not coping with it, its a case of wanting to be the best. And therefore you drive yourself harder. Its a very individual thing.

But surely you might be contributing to unreasonable expectations of work from everyone? By almost killing yourself you establish a norm that everyone must follow?

> Oh probably. But its a special kind of person that can do this, or that wants to do it. I'm sure a lot of people could do it but don't want to, who wouldn't find a lot of satisfaction in it. No I don't think what I do is for the best but I think that I, as an individual, have to do it, that I enjoy doing it, that I want to do it. And there's no way anybody could ever turn round to me and say "you could have done that better"...I think the way the business is going its relying heavily on very few people. Its reducing positions and I think it will become ever more highly competitive, and therefore if you want to get there then that's what you have to do. What you have to do is achieve...And the more resources get pulled away, the more you have to put in to achieve. At the end of the day that may be a false economy, and we all may fall in to early graves, but at the end of the day we have to achieve in order to keep the business alive [24].

Through taking on an increasing number of responsibilities with decreasing resources this manager had managed to establish a reputation for 'Enterprise' within the company, and was

firmly instituted as a potential 'high flier' (as a reward for being so virtuous the company had awarded this manager one of their two coveted places on a national retail management summer school at Oxford University, a sure mark of distinction).

However, her reputation amongst senior management contrasted markedly with the views expressed about her by her colleagues in-store. They felt that they were being forced to carry out the extra work she had volunteered to take on in order to further her own career. According to her staff, their manager was actually putting one over both on them, and also on senior management. Not only were they performing the extra work that Head Office had allocated to her while she took the credit, but she was actually using company time to conduct her non-work life. Certainly she had virtually lived in the store for three months they agreed, but she had also created space for herself by taking extremely long lunch-breaks and 'unofficial' afternoons off, by regularly inviting friends and family into the office during working hours and by constantly using the phone to make personal calls. Meanwhile, they had been unable to enjoy any of these benefits themselves.

The manager here, and the trainee supervisor, they seem to like the pressure 'cause it makes them feel like they're important and in charge and that. But really and truly, are they doing the right thing? That's what matters. Our manager is young and ambitious and she wants to get on, and she'll probably go a long way. But she uses people. She's using me...because I'm running the branch for her. Where do we take the money ? Here on the floor, not sitting in the office talking on the phone to friends, and taking long lunches. She's been in and out. I've taken a load off her back. But she's taking liberties...on the phone for hours talking to friends...Now that doesn't matter once in a while, but she's in there for an hour or more and the phone's always engaged. So if she does it everyone should be able to do it, but they can't. It doesn't make staff feel very happy. The manager brings her boyfriend in here and takes him into the cash office when they're cashing up... its so unfair that some people get all the praise for giving the impression they work so hard when they're letting the shop go to rack and ruin, while the girls who work

so hard for so little take the blame when things go wrong [25].

As this example - a distinctly managerial 'la perruque' - indicates, managers and not only workers practice 'popular tactics' for their own ends and more profitably so because of their relative power. Indeed the ability of store managers to create space for themselves is often founded upon the negation of such opportunities for those beneath them in the organizational hierarchy.

Managers felt justified in personalising their work space because of what they saw as their greater individual responsibility for the success of the branch. Sales assistants, they argued, had an easier time of it because less was expected of them by the company. Therefore they didn't really deserve the luxury of private time at work. Unsurprisingly, sales assistants didn't quite see it that way.

Me and the other full-timer go out nearly every night and we discuss our lives with each other at work and plan what we're going to do after work. But the manager says "discuss your social life in your own time". She hates us having any of our friends coming in and won't let us receive personal calls on the phone. And if they do come in she wants us to be rude to them and say we can't talk to them. I mean I had a friend come in who I hadn't seen for two years and I was asking how she was doing when the manager came over and in front of my friend said "Is this your friend? Will you tell her to go?" I felt embarrassed and my friend felt embarrassed. And yet if the manager has a friend come in she'll stand there for ages chatting to them and if you say anything she says " I work hard you know. I'm allowed five minutes off". I mean we work hard as well but she doesn't seem to understand that... She pushes us to do the work while she goes up to the staff room to have a fag, or goes out shopping. Sometimes she says "Oh, I've worked really hard, I'm going to have a couple of hours off". Then she'll disappear to do some shopping. So its us that's rushing around doing all the work and she turns round and says "I've been working really hard this week", and I say "what do you think I've been

doing, sitting down all day?" [26].

In the following section I examine the tactical activities of sales assistants in retailing, indicating how their inferior access to the 'positional goods' enjoyed by management - information, financial rewards etc - elicits from them an 'increased deviousness and fantasy' (de Certeau, 1984; viii). I begin by exploring the ways in which sales assistants use or consume those 'cultural technologies' through which they are being most explicitly encouraged to imagine they 'own' the business they work for.

"Its not ours, we just work here" : sales assistant's 'tactics of consumption'

As Taylor (1984: 159) has suggested, the modern normalizing technologies and practices through which people are 'made up' still lend themselves 'to the control of some by others'. In high street retail outlets, where there are often only a handful of people working closely together in a relatively small space, the inculcation of self-discipline is easily interpreted as the imposition of discipline by some on others. At the lowest levels of the organizational hierarchy, control can appear quite personal; the manager *is* the company as far as many sales assistant are concerned.

As I indicated in the previous chapter the discourse of Enterprise places great emphasis upon the 'interpersonal skills' of store management in 'winning over' their employees - in generating a greater sense of identification between staff and company, and of encouraging every employee to feel personally accountable for the success of their branch. However, if the conduct of interpersonal relations is represented as increasingly important to the success of the retail enterprise then this presupposes, rather than annuls, the capacity of individual employees as agents. In other words, the relations between government and the governed passes through the manner in which governed individuals are willing to exist as particular subjects.

At company A it is through the technology of Quality Teams (QTs) that sales staff are being most explicitly encouraged to imagine that they 'own' the business they work for. The psycho-therapeutic presuppositions inscribed within the QT process - self-monitoring as a key

to commitment and so forth - structure it as a rational technology of the personal and interpersonal. QTs are designed to replace direct control with self-regulation. They provide an ethical exercise for their members aimed at producing a particular kind of relationship to self and, through this, the ethical demeanour and standing of a particular kind of person.: the enterprising self. However, delineating the structure of, and dominant meanings inscribed within, QTs says nothing about what they are for those at whom they are aimed.

The introduction of QTs in A's stores was sold to staff as a 'freedom package'; as an opportunity for each individual employee within the company to become more personally involved in the running of the business and thus to develop himself or herself as an enterprising individual. QTs in-store are chaired by the branch manager. The chair sets the agenda indicating the 'whats' that have cascaded down from the immediately superior QT. The chair's role is to imperceptibly guide the meeting and certainly not to highjack it or dominate it, ensuring that everyone gets involved and that the group agrees to a series of 'hows' and that every member of the QT is personally committed to to their implementation. Emphasis is placed on getting staff to see the 'hows' as the result of their own autonomous deliberations, thus ensuring that they feel 'ownership' of the QT . The effective 'impression management' of the QT process is thus represented as integral to its success. Any overt hint of manipulation or force is deemed to spell the kiss of death.

At one store in central London where QTs were about to be introduced both management and staff were far from enthusiastic about its prospects. For the manager, the QT format appeared to be 'too dictatorial' [27]. Rather than mirroring the formal organizational hierarchy he felt that the QT structure should be reversed. The 'whats' should emanate from the bottom rather than the top thus minimising the possibility of employees interpreting QTs as an exercise in managerial manipulation. As things stood, he felt the QT structure would merely exacerbate his 'natural' desire to command. For staff, managerial manipulation was just the worry. They felt that QTs would mean an increased workload in an already understaffed store, and therefore anticipated the imminent arrival of QTs with trepidation, rather than with unmitigated joy.

Just before the first QT meeting was about to take place in-store, the branch manager was taken out for a drink by a Facilitator - a personnel specialist from Area Office assigned to initial QT meetings to help institute them and ensure their smooth running - and given a number of

hints as to how to construct an appropriate atmosphere whereby everyone would feel at ease, equal in status and thus free to speak their minds. The emphasis was on creating the impression that QT meetings represented a space where normal workplace relations did not apply. So, for example, as staff assembled for the first meeting the manager made a point of signifying the egalitarian nature of the QT by going over to the staff drinks machine and switching it onto 'free vend'. However, this rather blatant gesture did nothing to alleviate the suspicions of staff, instead it served to intensify them. In a move every bit as calculated as that of their manager, staff signalled their disbelief in the apparent reversal of work relations by collectively ignoring this invitation to have a free drink, and instead walking over to the table where the meeting was to take place and sitting down. Although, after a suitable time lapse, the Facilitator attempted to salvage something from the manager's initial manoeuvre by offering to get people a drink, no one accepted.

Throughout the meeting staff simply responded to questions and prompts from the chair and from the facilitator. At no point did they 'run with the meeting' themselves, as Head Office promotional material suggested they should/would, nor, conversely did they explicitly attempt to railroad it. Instead they projected an air of quiet resignation which only served further to highlight the artificiality and constructedness of the event, and thus the obvious control being exerted by the chair and the facilitator. Behaving in this manner, staff indicated their disbelief in the QT process as a vehicle for their own 'empowerment'.

At various points in the meeting, the degree of explicit manipulation of social interaction taking place became almost too embarrassing for comfort. For example, having asked two members of of staff for their opinions on how to avoid till receipts ending up on the floor of the store and having received the reply that perhaps staff could make better use of the bins under their tills, the chair declared "That's just what I wanted you to say". The meaning of this comment was not lost on staff or on the Facilitator who berated the manager on this interactional gaff in her debrief of his performance after the meeting.

As the QT meeting progressed it became apparent that the chair's main priority was to obtain three 'hows' from staff, so as to ensure that, publically - i.e. to Head Office - at least, the meeting could be judged a success. In other words, as long as the formal objectives

'cascading' down from above were met then the manager/chair could present his branch meeting as a 'success' to the chair of the immediately superior QT meeting of which he was also a member; in effect, he would have satisfied the calculating, quantifying logic of the strategic gaze.

As far as staff were concerned, while they had ostensibly come up with three 'hows' of their own volition, they had made it perfectly clear in their mode of participation that they felt no personal involvement in the process by which these had been reached, nor indeed did they feel any personal responsibility for their implementation in-store. Rather, they had done just enough to avoid being sanctioned by their manager, whilst expressing their disbelief in the whole process at the same time. They believed they had no choice but to attend the meeting; however, they simultaneously refused to condone what it was meant to stand for [28].

In de Certeau's terminology the sales assistants' consumption of the QT meeting was a case of 'escaping without leaving' - of 'transgression'. In other words, the ethical conduct of staff in refusing the subject positions inscribed within the QT as a rational tehnology of the self remained a *private* act. By actually coming up with and agreeing to the three 'hows' *in practice* staff actually contributed to the reproduction of the QT mechanism even though they sought to resist its effects.

The manager's desperate attempts to obtain these 'hows' - which drove him to continually undermine his own attempts at presenting the QT as an egalitarian space - serves to highlight an important point. The fact that employees did not consciously identify with the aims and objectives of the QT and that the atmosphere of the meeting was not one of equality, unity and free speech, didn't actually matter. The meeting could only have been construed as a 'programmatic' failure if employees consumption of it had *explicitly* resisted the logic of the strategic gaze. However, because the tactics they deployed made resistance a private act, and therefore invisible - three 'hows' were obtained, thus satisfying the objectives of the strategic calculation - *they did not count.* What did matter, because it was quantifiable, collatable and classifiable, was the acquistion of these three visible 'hows'. As this example suggests, while staff did not take the QT seriously, and attempted to distance themselves from its claims, they nonetheless reproduced it through their practical involvement in the constitution of the three 'hows'.

Similarly, at Company **B**, sales assistants attempted to escape the effects of the company's 'strategy' without being able to keep them at a distance. For example, rather than seeing the company's half-day strategy presentation as an invitation to become more personally accountable for the performance of the their store, staff viewed it as a few hours away from work [29]. As part of their 'strategy induction programme' sales assistants were sent out of their own store in pairs to 'test shop' a number of other high street retail establishments. They were given a questionnaire which they used as a means of judging, for example, the quality of service they were offered in the stores they visited. Upon their return to their own branch, they were put into larger groups and asked to compare the experience of shopping in these other stores with the shopping experience their own store offered to customers. In particular, they were questioned on the ways in which other retailers offered a guide to possible improvements in customer care, quality, and the like, that they themselves could profitably undertake at their own branch. For most sales staff, 'test shopping' was perceived as a 'great skive'; an opportunity to go outside the shop, have a wander and a laugh, while performing their allotted tasks at a leisurely pace. The strategy induction programme was seen very much as something that belonged to 'them' - store management and Head office - and not to 'us': the sales assistants. For shop-floor employees, the programme provided a one-off opportunity to create some space for themselves whilst at work.

> It was just a skive. They're talkin' about this strategy thing. They're talkin' about it for themselves, 'cause like it hasn't got anything to do with us. They're just gonna put the stuff in the shop for us to work with. It means a lot to them 'cause its <u>theirs</u>. Its not <u>ours</u>, we just work here [30].

A central element in **B**'s strategy was the introduction of the 'Promise'. In line with other retailers, **B**'s senior management team was focusing increasingly upon the issue of customer service. In order to indicate to customers that **B** was a quality retailer and to promote customer loyalty, senior management introduced the Company **B** 'Promise' of 'Total Satisfaction Guaranteed'. If customers were in anyway dissatisfied with their purchases they would now

be able to return them to any one of B's stores, with or without a receipt, and receive an instant refund or exchange, and an apology from a company representative. B's store management and staff were informed that the 'Promise' was the company's way of differentiating their 'offer' to customers from that of their competitors, as well as a highly efficient, cost-effective mechanism for the conduct of contemporary retail business. In fact, far from losing the company money it would generate extra sales in the long-run as B's reputation for quality and total satisfaction grew 'by word of mouth'. As part of the 'Promise', staff were encouraged to treat customers as if they were guests visiting their house, or as they themselves would ideally wish to be treated, and informed that under no circumstances were they to argue with customers over refunds or exchanges. Living up to the 'Promise', staff were informed, was the way to become a virtuous person at work.

However, for most sales staff the 'Promise' was seen as a guaranteed way of losing money and as pandering to the whims of customers at the expense of the company's own employees. In a curious inversion of the company's own preferred logic of identity sales staff indicated their sense of 'ownership' of their store in their intense antipathy towards the 'Promise'. For them the institution of the 'Promise' was seen as a criminal offence, endangering, rather then ensuring, the company's financial success. This alternative sense of 'ownership' - which was only articulated in the context of its eradication - was often countered by management then having to tell staff not to worry about giving instant refunds because 'its not your money'. Rather then forging a new sense of subjective investment in the fortunes of the company, staff interpreted the 'Promise' as an attack on an already established sense of relative autonomy and identification.

> Before it used to be that if they didn't have the receipt on refunds they couldn't have one. Now they get a refund or an exchange whatever! Even if there's a hole in it where the tag used to be they still get away with it, and that makes us look like fools. And if you tell your manager how ridiculous you feel they just say 'its not your money' [31].

For most sales assistants, the 'Promise' was just a license for customers to practice fraud

and rip-off the company. More importantly, though, it symbolised a massive gap between the status of shop-workers and that of 'the customer'. The 'Promise' was viewed by sales assistants as redefining them as 'slaves' to customers desires. Whereas the old refund policy - no receipt, no exchange or refund - had allowed sales assistants a certain imagined parity of status in their dealings with customers, the 'Promise' re-imagined the sales assistant as a mere cypher in the company's will to please.

> The thing with customer service here is if customers want to change anything they're allowed to change anything, even underwear, swimwear, they're allowed to change it and I think that's one of the reasons they're losing money because they change almost everything and I don't thing they should...Because a customer could have something she had from here which she's worn for four or five months and she'll waltz in here and she'll change it. The management say its like our policy for customers, they want 'em to keep coming in here through us treating 'em nice. But we think its wrong. We do it but we don't like it. I mean if we want to change anything and we don't have a receipt we won't be allowed to change it and yet a customer would, and that's all wrong, 'innit ? We can't give 'em a credit slip anymore, its always "give 'em the money". Even when they suspect someone of nicking the stuff we're still encouraged to give customers their money. Sometimes they do, when they get a bit suspicious, give 'em a credit slip but nowhere near as often as we did before this strategy thing happened. And I reckon since we've had this we're losing loads of money [32].

Rather than harmonizing the relations between servicers and customers, the 'Promise' became the site of an intense 'friend-enemy relation'. For staff the 'Promise' represented a loss of ownership and of self esteem for 'us', and its transference to 'them', the customers.

> We're 'us' and they're 'them', friends and enemies, yeah. What they don't seem to understand is that we're customers too. We go shopping too. Its almost like they

think we're slaves. We don't leave here but go into a little corner where there's beds and we go to sleep there and get up the next morning and come out into the shop. There's no idea amongst customers that we're just at work...I remember one day we had to close the dressing room early because it was just stuffed full of clothes and we just had to clear up the mess and put the stuff back on the floor. And this woman comes up and says "I want to use the dressing room". So we explain to her and she still won't have it. So she demands to see the manager. She won't put herself in our position, she thinks she's God. So the management open it up for her and then you've got the staff unhappy saying "Good God! What do they think we are, scum?". In a way you have to be nice. As a sales assistant you don't have the authority to tell them what to do. You have to cope with it, you've got no choice. These are the people, so we're told, who are paying our wages. There's nothing I can do about it the position I'm in at the moment. And managers they answer to someone else as well. Management are accountable too, so they've got to please them too. You just have to grin and bear it [33].

For many sales assistants the increased benefits accruing to the 'enterprising' consumer have taken place directly at their expense. As far as they are concerned, the price of enskilling the sovereign customer is the effective erosion of any form of distinctive 'skill' from the work they perform. However, with the 'Promise', as with so much else, while sales assistants consciously contest its claims they 'still do it'.

As de Certeau (1984:xviii) suggests, for groups such as sales assistants, an 'inferior access to information, financial means and compensations of all kinds' elicits 'an increased deviousness, fantasy, and laughter'. Most sales assistants reported that they spent much of their time at work 'day-dreaming', often disappearing inside themselves to the extent that 'I don't even hear people addressing me' [34]. Similarly, they took delight in describing the increasing lengths they had to go to in outwitting management and the pleasures they derived from 'having a skive' [35].

Such 'tactical' activities as 'skiving' are models of transgression, exemplars of that 'silent', 'ironic' activity of users who 'maintain their reserve in private and without the knowledge of

the "masters"' (de Certeau, 1984: 173). However, as Frow (1991:57) amongst others has indicated

> the peculiar ambiguity of the problematic of transgression lies in its total dependence upon the law that is to be transgressed... This is exactly to 'escape without leaving'.

In other words, while sales assistants appear to 'know what they are doing', they continue to do things as if they didn't. Through the act of transgression they attempt to indicate that they are 'not taking things seriously', however, at the same time, they are still doing these same things (Zizek, 1991).

"Fear is the great mover, in the end": beyond the invisibility of 'tactics'

If the 'tactical' activity of sales assistants is mainly transgressive, does their behaviour ever create 'a reality that every expert must face', or do their acts remain exclusively private, ironic, and invisible to the strategic gaze ? Although the bulk of the evidence presented in this chapter does suggest that the tactical activity of sales assistants is predominantly transgressive, and not overtly conflictual, there are moments when their behaviour does become 'visible'. In this final section I explore what happens when the dynamics of 'labelling from above' come in to conflict with 'the actual behaviour of those so labelled'.

As I indicated earlier in this chapter, for sales assistants at Company **B** one of the most detested elements of the company's strategy was the uniform they were contractually obliged to wear. Nothing highlighted the perceived status gap between **B**'s own sales staff, on the one hand, and concessions staff and customers, on the other, more than the uniform.

Rather than allowing them to present 'a quality, upmarket image' to customers, staff felt that the uniform robbed them of all self-respect, making them 'look like schoolchildren'. No member of staff would ever wear the uniform either to or from work but always changed into and out of it at the workplace, such was the sense of embarrassment and shame that wearing it

engendered. For staff, the uniform encapsulated the company's disrespect for them as individuals and their reduction to 'a mass of numbers'.

> They said we can wear this uniform on our way home and I said "I wouldn't be seen dead in this, man". I tell you one time I was late out so I thought to get home in time I better leave my uniform on instead of wearing my own clothes. And I get to the bus-stop and everyone starts laughing. One of my friends said "What happened, man ? You had a fight with your trousers?" And the man on the bus he says "That shirt, man, it looks like someone been sick on you". And I thought, "Oh thanks, man". So since then I haven't ever worn that uniform home or from home to work [36].

Although both store management and some Head Office staff had considerable sympathy with the sales assistants complaints, they were not prepared to remove the uniform from service, nor to countenance any improvisation in its usage by staff [37]. The uniform, they argued, was a central element of the strategy; an integral component of the company's integrated design offering to customers. Any tampering with it was deemed harmful to the company's chosen, 'scientifically' constituted image, and was therefore unacceptable to the strategic gaze.

> I don't care what they wear at eleven p.m. in a disco, I couldn't give a damn. But when they're at work they portray a professional image that appeals to the majority, not the minority. So they will conform. M & S uniform is not the most fashionable uniform in the world but it looks as smart and presentable on a sixteen year old as it does on a fifty-nine year old. They conform. There is a standard. You wear a court shoe. You wear stockings, or whatever. They don't rebel. In B there has tended to be more rebellion. The managers have got to control that, to make sure that staff and store project the right image. As I said, what they wear after work I don't really mind, but when they're at work they'll project the image we want them to project, and that's the initial bit. That's first impressions. The

reason that M & S gets such high ratings on all aspects of its business is on its first impressions. You walk into the store. Its neat, its clean, its tidy. You see easily identifiable staff, not millions of them but you notice the uniform...In lots of B's stores its been the opposite, because of the variety, either through concessions, or through the reduced levels of staff, staff aren't easily identified. When they are visible there is so much variety of individualism translated into the uniform that there is no longer a uniform; so many adaptions to the uniform that the image portrayed is chaotic. That first three seconds impression is not good [43].

However, for sales staff the uniform was an issue they were unable to compromise over. They felt it attacked their sense of what they were and what they wanted to be; in order to be able to live with themselves in the uniform, staff began to 'accessorize' it - by wearing brightly coloured Kickers and Reeboks, loads of rings, bracelets, and badges, and by adding pieces of their own clothing to the basics of the uniform - making it more like them rather than becoming as one with it; in other words, reappropriating it As staff recalled, the introduction of the uniform was one of the few occasions when the shop-floor stuck together on an issue and consciously attempted to challenge management authority by adapting the uniform to their own requirements.

As the Area Manager's comments above indicate, however, by accessorizing the uniform staff crossed the boundary between private and public morality ; between the invisible and the visible. Uniformity was a strategic goal, its implementation was closely monitored by both Area and Head Offices. By adapting the uniform staff posed a direct challenge to the strategic gaze, one that Head office determined to meet head-on.

There's really been only one time when all the girls were up in arms trying to stop something happening, and that was the uniform. Everyone just went crazy. They were rolling the trousers up, they were hanging out the shirt, wearing their own T-shirt. Then the personnel woman from head office come down and had a go at us. "If you do not wear this shirt tucked in, trousers let loose" - 'cause everyone was

> wearing an elastic band wrapped round them to make them look baggy - "they will dismiss you". And everybody started to wear it properly. Everybody obeyed. But its the nearest we've had to a hectic scene since I've been here [39].

In this instance, when the sales assistants began to create a visible reality in direct opposition to that emanating 'from above' - in other words, to 'create a reality that every expert must face' - this resistance was simply construed as further proof of the need to re-inforce and extend the power of the experts. Although sales assistants were initially offered a stark choice in the old management style of JFDI (Just Fucking Do It): conform to the logic of the strategic gaze or depart, they were subsequently promised a voice in the design of the next company uniform. In other words, while the strategy appeared 'not to have worked' - there was resistance to one of its central tenets - this apparent failure was assimilated by strategy into 'a general tactic of subjection' (Foucault, 1979: 272).

For staff, compliance was not the result of promises of individual involvement in the design of the next uniform, but of fear. Most sales assistants simply could not afford to lose the money they earnt, meagre as it was.

> The money, nothing else keeps me here. And I'm scared. I wouldn't <u>want</u> to go and work in another shop, but if I did leave I'd have to go and work in another shop 'cause I wouldn't know what else to do [40].

There was a strong sense among many sales assistants of being structurally locked in to shop-work or other forms of low level servicing work. For these individuals - female and male, black and white - their lack of cultural, as well as financial, capital appeared to have assigned them to the periphery for all time. They couldn't see any practical way out of their double-bind.

> Most of 'em ain't got the qualifications to get a better job. Some of 'em try and get back into education. When I was younger I dreamed of getting in to the music

scene, the dance scene, but now I just see that as a hobby thing. I did want to be a stenographer so bad but I didn't have the money to do the course. The only way I could afford to do that is through a loan. And I can't afford that [41].

I'm not qualified to be a lawyer or a social worker and I couldn't even afford to try. I can't live without my money. I've got to have my board. I got to live , I got to eat, got to buy clothes. So you've got to get out there and get a job, just straight from school, YTS or whatever [42].

The only feasible escape for many of these sales assistants was from one shop job into another. Indeed, according to both branch staff and senior management at both Company A and Company B, there existed a very large pool of people working in the retail industry at sales assistant level who simply moved from one lower level retail position to another with considerable regularity.

This sort of job you can pick up just like that, so I don't think its worth fighting for. All the girls that leave they just nip off down the road and start working in another shop. Some people I know have moved up but a lot of people I know just keep bouncing around between sales assistant jobs [43].

Although this migration from one retail job to another appears, from a 'God's eye view' to be just the ultimate act in a on-going saga of 'escaping without leaving', the 'wandering trajectories' traced by disgruntled sales assistants are, in fact, a source of considerable frustration to the 'labellers from above'. Turnover is anti-strategic, its effects are visible and its unwanted expansion is an indicator of 'lack of control'.

Standing in his office overlooking a bustling Oxford Street, an Area Manager at Company A admitted that turnover of two hundred per cent or more in some of his stores was playing havoc with aspects of the company's Secure Shopping Strategy. Quality Teams in-store were continually having to be re-launched from scratch as each consecutive meeting contained more

new members than old. Although the problem of staff turnover was something that A's personnel and training experts were urgently working on, this manager felt that they were fighting a losing battle. Sales assistants, he suggested, "just don't know what they want".

"What was wrong with these people ?", he wanted to know, why didn't they show any loyalty, any commitment to the company ? He blamed the individuals concerned. It was their fault. Their priorities were all wrong. They were too self-obsessed, too calculating. They would take a job in the shop next door if it paid £2 extra a week. Throwing the area's staff turnover figures onto his desk he said "They're bloody nomads"[44].

concluding remarks: in every dream home a heartache?

In the discourse of Enterprise, the work organization is represented as a new imaginary 'dream home' in which people can obtain both a sense of security and a sense of independence and individuality. Operating with a 'unitary frame of reference' Enterprise projects the vision of a cohesive but inherently flexible organization where an organic complementarity is established between the 'greatest possible realization of the intrinsic abilities of individuals at work' and the 'optimum productivity and profitability of the corporation'. In this vision the 'No Win' scenario associated with a mechanistic, bureaucratic lack of Enterprise is transformed into a permanent 'Win/Win' situation through the active development of a 'simultaneous loose-tight' flexible, creative and organic entrepreneurialism (Peters & Waterman, 1982; Pinchot, 1985; Peters, 1987).

In order to constitute itself as an objectivity, Enterprise forges a break with its own conditions of emergence and instead supposes itself to have its own 'place' from which it can reflect upon the world and programme 'reality'. It projects itself as being beyond the exigencies of the everyday; as looking down 'from above', enjoying a 'God's eye view'. As Laclau (1990: 33) has indicated, however, this process of objectification entails a concealment. If objectivity is founded upon exclusion, then traces of that exclusion will always somehow be present. As de Certeau (1984:48) suggests beneath the 'monotheistic' privilege that panoptic discourses have won for themselves lies a 'polytheism' of 'scattered practices, dominated but not erased by the triumphant success of one of their number'. For de Certeau the presence of

these 'scattered practices' attests to the impossibility of abolishing antagonism and, therefore, of creating the happy relation the organization would like to have with itself. These scattered practices are the leftover, the surplus, seperating the 'Real' from its symbolization. They are, in other words, the space of the subject. There is the 'subject' because 'objectivity' can never fully constitute itself. In this sense the subject is 'antagonistic' - a hard kernel resisting symbolic integration/dissolution.

However, in what sense does this 'fundamental impossibility' negate the power of Enterprise? Does the recognition of 'impossibility' mean that Enterprise has failed? According to Foucault (1979; 1982) the exercise of power may depend as much on the promotion of some kind of resistance or criticism as on the effectiveness of the means mobilised against them. In other words, an extremely important dimension of the exercise of power is that it never succeeds in living up to its promises. As I indicated in chapter three, far from negating power 'impossibility' works within power from the beginning. The very impossibility of government justifies and reproduces the attempt to govern.

The evidence presented throughout this chapter clearly shows that impossibility is not a problem for Enterprise. For example, in the first place, the lack of conscious identification between most sales staff and the organizations for which they work does not indicate the imminent collapse of the entire entrepreneurial edifice. Although Enterprise requires its subjects to identify with the goals and objectives of the organizations for which they work, what is the status of this identification ? If the subjects of those technologies and practices within which Enterprise is inscribed indicate a conscious lack of identification with the ethics of the Enteprising Self, can the discourse of Enterprise be said to have 'failed' ?

As I indicated above, 'tactical' consumption tends to remain invisible to the logic of the strategic gaze. In so far as tactics are simply transgressive they do not pose a problem for the reproduction of Enterprise because the dominance of that discourse is not so much inscribed within people's consciousness as in the technologies and practices to which they are subjected. As Zizek (1989: 32) has argued, 'people know very well how things really are, but they are still doing them as if they did not know'. Similarly, Foucault (quoted in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982: 187) suggests that 'people know what they do; they frequently know why they do what

they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does'. In other words, even if people do not take Enterprise seriously, even if they attempt to keep a certain ironic distance from its claims, they are still reproducing it through their practical involvement in those technologies within which Enterprise is inscribed.

Secondly, even when Enterprise can be shown to have visibly failed; when visible signs of resistance to it can be delineated, does this actually mean that Enterprise 'doesn't work'? Again, for both Foucault and post-marxist thinkers such as Zizek, the visible presence of 'impossibility' does not mean that a discourse/ideology has failed to achieve its objectives. As Foucault (1979) suggests, from their inception modern technologies have 'never worked'. They have never managed to construct the sorts of persons they claimed they were qualified so to do. Therefore the question is not 'why does Enterprise fail ?', but rather what other ends are served by this failure which is not perhaps a failure at all ?

Foucault's answer (1979: 272) is direct. In discussing the failure of the prison system to achieve the ends its advocates postulated as desirable he concludes that

> one would be forced to suppose that the prison, and no doubt punishment in general, is not intended to eliminate offenses, but rather to distinguish them, to distribute them, to use them: that it is not so much that they render docile those who are liable to transgress the law but that they tend to assimilate the transgression of the laws in a general tactic of subjection.

In other words, all 'normalizing power' succeeds when it is only partially successful (Minson, 1985). An essential component of technologies of normalization is that they are themselves an integral component of the systematic creation, classification and control of anomalies in the social body. 'Their raison d'etre comes from their claim to have isolated such anomalies and their promise to normalize them' (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982: 195). The spread of normalization operates through the creation of abnormalities it must then treat and reform. Through identifiying the anomalies scientifically, technologies of power are in the perfect position to supervise and administer them.

As Dreyfus & Rabinow (1982) indicate, this effectively transforms into a technical problem

and thus into a field of expanding power, what might otherwise be considered a failure of the whole sytem of operation. Technologies of power advance by taking what is essentially a political problem, removing it from the realm of political discourse and recasting it as a technical problem through the neutral vocabulary of science. Thus, when there is resistance, or failure to achieve stated aims, this is then construed as further proof of the need to reinforce and extend the power of experts: 'we are promised normalization and happiness through science and law. When they fail this only justifies the need for more of the same' (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982: 196).

As Zizek (1989:43) argues, while subjectification/interpellation/labelling from above never fully works, because the 'Real' resists all attempts at symbolic integration/dissolution, 'this leftover, far from hindering the full submission of the subject to the ideological command, is the very condition of it: it is precisely this non-integrated surplus of senseless traumatism which confers on the Law its unconditional authority'.

In this chapter, I have attempted to complete my analysis of how people are 'made up' at work in contemporary British retailing by considering what store managers and sales assistants make of the technologies and representations to which they are subjected and which they cannot keep at a distance. I suggested that by focusing upon the tactics of consumption of 'those so-labelled' it becomes possible to expose the limits of subjectification: that 'labelling from above' is both excessive and inadequate.

In the first section of the chapter, I argued that while the discourse of Enterprise prefers a *tabula rasa* upon which to write its compositions it actually seeks to inscribe itself upon 'human material' with particular biographies and to institute itself within organizations with specific histories. In other words, 'Enterprise' acts upon an 'always already' split and differentiated human population and upon organizations where the structuring of work relations, for example, already involves the fracturing of collections of employees around which 'friend-enemy' groupings have developed. I argued that while the establishment of Enterprise as an 'objective presence' within certain contemporary retailing organizations involves the 'monotheistic' privileging of this discourse, the traces of other, now 'invisible'

discourses survive within these organizations. It is through the presence of these 'scattered practices', I suggested, that an 'uncodeable difference' insinuates itself into the internal world of the retail organization.

However, while acknowledging that these 'scattered practices' served to delineate the limits of 'labelling from above', I argued that it was still necessary to distinguish between them in order to show how they differentially enabled those involved to create space for themselves at the workplace.

In the second section of the chapter, I traced the differing tactical trajectories of store managers, on the one hand, and sales assistants on the other. I suggested that to a large extent managers were able to practice 'popular tactics' more profitably than sales assistants because of their greater relative power within the workplace. Indeed, I argued that the tactical *utilisation of their own staff* was often a key element in managers' attempts to create space for themselves at work while simultaneously appearing to be at one with the strategic gaze. In other words, the ability of store managers to create a temporary space for themselves at work was often founded upon the negation of such opportunities for those beneath them in the organizational hierarchy. For sales staff, on the other hand, a more limited room for manoeuvre elicited an increased deviousness and fantasy.

I argued, however, that while both managers and sales assistants 'used' the technologies and representations to which they were subjected for ends far removed from those inscribed within them by their makers, their 'tactics of consumption' remained almost invariably 'invisible' - matters of 'private morality'. As fundamentally 'transgressive practices', these 'tactics of consumption' were incomprehensible to the logic of the strategic gaze. At the same time, however, they could not pose a direct challenge to the dominance of strategic rationality because their very being was dependent upon the law that that they transgressed.

In the final section of the chapter, I suggested that although the presence of tactics of consumption within contemporary retailing organizations attests to the impossibility of abolishing antagonism and therefore of creating the happy relation the organization would like to have with itself, this does not indicate the 'failure' or impending collapse of the discourse of Enterprise within retailing. I wish to suggest that in so far as tactics of consumption are

transgressive in character they do not pose a problem for the discourse of Enterprise because the dominance of that discourse is not so much inscribed in people's consciousness as in the technologies to which they are subjected. In other words, although both managers and sales assistants do not take the discourse of Enterprise seriously, they are still reproducing it through their practical involvement in those technologies within which the rationality of Enterprise is inscribed. 'Cynical distance', 'laughter' and 'ironic detachment' are, so to speak, already part of the game.

Secondly, I wish to suggest that far from negating the discursive power of Enterprise, 'impossibility' works within power from the beginning; that the impossibility of government justifies and reproduces the attempt to govern. It is therefore plausible to say that discourses only know they are working when they are not entirely successful. Thus, the 'lack of fit' between the programmatic aspirations of 'labelling from above' and the 'actual behaviour of those so-labelled' does not undermine the the power of strategic rationality. Rather, 'labelling from above' operates through the creation of abnormalities it must then treat and reform. In other words, when there is resistance or failure to achieve stated aims, this is then construed as evidence of the need to reinforce and extend the power of strategic rationality.

Notes

1. However, there are signs of a re-emerging interest in the culture of paid work within certain sections of Cultural Studies. Both Paul Willis (1990:14) and Angela McRobbie (1991: 15-16) have recently argued that the sphere of paid work remains an extremely important source of identification; an arena in which people perform 'necessary symbolic work' and exercise 'symbolic creativity'.

2. Interview with Managing Director, Company B, July, 1990.

3. One Area Manager who'd been with the company for fifteen years in various capacities and who was well known throughout B's management circles as a 'non-believer' in the redemptive power of the 'strategy', was 'made an offer he couldn't refuse' shortly after being interviewed for this project. In the interview he had expressed his dislike of current developments in the company. He felt that management and staff had been 'cut to the bone', through a series of rationalisations, so that they no longer had any 'time or space' to institute the strategy. Instead all their energies were expended on simply getting the 'day-to-day activities', of opening the store, serving customers and stocking up, done. They were in a 'permanent crisis situation' with no time to spare on anything but the very basics of the business. Overall, he felt that neither the systems were in place, nor were adequate resources available, to institute the strategy, and that, as it stood, the Company B board had 'put the cart before the horse'.

> there's a danger that the whole thing'll fall as flat as a pancake. Those that have been in the company for a long time are thinking "we've seen this sort of thing before". In three months time it'll have disappeared completely.

Although this was a view repeated on a number of occasions by both lower and middle management, as well as sales staff, during the course of research very few people admitted to expressing their fears publicly to senior management. Many chose to 'speak the language' of

Enterprise publicly for fear of otherwise not appearing to 'have what it takes'.

Not long after the interview took place I learnt from a Store Manager at **B** that the Area Manager had resigned, though, as I was informed, this 'was more a case of being pushed than choosing to go'.

Interview with an Area Manager, Company **B**, July, 1990 and interview with a Small Store's Manager , Company **B**, July, 1990.

4. Interview with Assistant Manager, Company **A**, Large Store, Central London, May, 1990.

5. Interview with Assistant Manager, Company **A**, Large Store, Central London, May, 1990.

6. Interview with Sales Manager (female), Company **A**, Large Store, Central London, May, 1990.

7. Interviews with Graduate General Management Trainee (male), Company **A**, Large Store, Central London, May, 1990, and with Graduate Professional Management Trainee (male), Company **A**, Small Store, Central London, June, 1990.

8. Interview with Area Assistant Training Officer (female), Company **A**, Central London, June, 1990.

9. Interview with Personnel Officer (female), Company **A**, Large Store, Central London, May, 1990.

Both the Assistant Area Training Officer and the Personnel Officer, quoted above, stressed that the dominance of senior positions by Professionals was also, at the same time, a dominance by gender. Almost all senior executives at **A** were not only Professionals but men. This degree of dominance was not mirrored at store level, however. In central London, for example, almost half of the store managers were women. This latter development, of quite recent origin, corresponds to the quite considerable increase in the number of women taking the Professional qualification in question. However, in a now familiar pattern, the gradual

feminization of the Profession has not yet produced any major disruption in gender relations within the company. Being a Professional is seen to be an occupation where women can do a job whilst 'remaining a woman' - i.e. taking care of child rearing and attending to domestic responsibilities. In other words, the Profession is well regarded as a consistent provider of well-remunerated, flexible employment opportunities. However, because A requires all its senior managers to be geographically mobile and to work full-time, women Professionals have tended to stay at the lower levels of A's management hierarchy.

The dominance of male Professionals in the higher echelons of A's management hierarchy and of women Professionals in the lower end of this hierarchy can therefore be partly explained as a consequence of the flexible employment opportunities available in the Professional occupation which have enabled women, through a combination of intermittant and part-time work, to combine their domestic roles with continuing employment in the Profession. Most of the female Professionals I spoke to at A informed me that the Profession had attracted them because it appeared to be a good job for women who wanted to have children at some stage. However, that said, the increasing number of women store managers working (full-time) in London does suggest that more women will be moving into higher management positions in the future, and this is certainly widely anticipated both within the Profession and within Company A management circles.

11. Interview with a Sales Assistant, Company B, Large Store, Central London, August, 1990.

12. As a store manager at another of A's central London stores informed me the department to which these women had been allocated tended to be seen 'as a bit of a dustbin in terms of staff' throughout the company.

Interview with a Store Manager, Small Stores, Company A, Central London, June, 1990.

13. Interview with a Part-Time Sales Assistant (black, female), Company A, Large Store, Central London, July, 1990.

This black woman was the only member of the department who would agree to talk to me in an interview context. Being white, middle class, male and wandering the shop floor and canteen asking questions about working for A ensured my being labelled as the worst of all possible outsiders to the women on the department: a white management spy.

Although this interviewee was able to offer interesting insights into the dynamics of the department that I would never otherwise have been privy to, she was in the strange position of being both an insider and an outsider herself. She was an insider on one level - being black, female and working closely with ther colleagues on a day-to-day basis. But, partly through working only part-time and thus never sharing rest breaks with her colleagues and partly through her antithetical attitude towards their "black radicalism", which she described as "narrow minded", on another level she was also an outsider - "I don't think they see me as one of them 'cause if something happens they don't tell me". It was only through wanting to express her difference from the group, to indicate her distance from their collective identity - "let me tell you man, you can learn nothing from your own culture...it's good to be different" - that she was willing to talk to me.

14. Interview with a Sales Assistant, Company B, Large Store, Central London, July, 1990.

15. Interview with a Store Manager, Company A, small store, Central London, June, 1990.

16. Interview with a Store Manager, Company B, small store, Surrey, September, 1990.

17. Interview with a Graduate Trainee Manager, Company B, small store, Hampshire, August, 1990.

18. Interview with a Store Manager, Company B, small store, Buckinghamshire, September, 1990.

19. Interview with a Store Manager, Company B, small store, Surrey, September, 1990.

20. Interview with a Store Manager, Company **B**, small store, Buckinghamshire, September, 1990.

21. Information obtained from in-store observation and from interviews with management and staff at both Company **A** and **B**.

22. Interview with a Store Manager, Company **B**, small store, Buckinghamshire, September, 1990.

23. Interview with a Graduate Trainee Manager, Company **B**, small store, Hampshire, August, 1990.

24. Interview with a Store Manager, Company **B**, small store, Central London, August, 1990.

25. Interview with a Supervisor, Company **B**, small store, Central London, August, 1990.

36. Interview with a Sales Assistant, Company **B**, small store, Sussex, July, 1990.

37. Interview with a Store Manager, Company **A**, small store, Central London, June, 1990.

28. Information obtained from observation of QT meetings and from interviews with both management and staff at a small store, Company **A**, Central London, July and August, 1990.

29. As, indeed, they also viewed the time they spent being interviewed by me!

30. Interview with a Senior Sales Assistant, Company **B**, Central London, September, 1990.

31. Interview with a Sales Assistant, Company **B**, Central London, September, 1990.

32. Interview with a Senior Sales Assistant, Company B, Central London, September, 1990.

33. Interview with a Sales Assistant, Company B, Central London, September, 1990.

34. Interview with a Sales Assistant, Company A, Central London, June, 1990.

35. Interviews with Sales Assistants and Senior Sales Assistants, Company B, Central London, September, 1990.

36. Interview with a Sales Assistant, Company B, Central London, September, 1990.

37. Shortly after I finished fieldwork at Company B a new 'smarter, stylish' staff uniform was introduced. However, despite limited staff consultation in its design it was still universally abhorred. Staff complained that after only one wash the white blouses they had been issued with had fallen apart. Eventually large parts of the uniform were recalled by Head Office for quality tests.

38. Interview with an Area Manager, Company B, July, 1990.

39. Interview with a Cashier Assistant, Company B, Central London, September, 1990.

40. Interview with a Senior Sales Assistant, Company B, Central London, September, 1990.

Neither Company A nor Company B was unionised. Apart from the conflict over the uniform at B, acts of resistance that I witnessed at both companies remained 'tactical' in character, and, more often than not, individually, rather than collectively, initiated.

Although sales staff did talk to me about the need for a Trade Union very few of them knew anything about what Unions did or, indeed, how they might go about joining one. They also suggested that management would react very badly to any staff moves in that direction. All in all the mood amongst staff was one of fatalism with regard to the efficacy of collective

action.

> The motivation isn't there. They just don't care. They don't feel they're listened to, so why bother ? It would just cause trouble and then they'd lose their jobs. Would a union make a difference ? I just can't see them allowing anything that could create a lot of trouble for them. They're not going to let something like that through.

Interview with a Sales Assistant, Company B, Central London, September, 1990.

Similarly, although there existed a high degree of 'solidarity' with the plight of other shop workers, this feeling of empathy was expressed entirely in private, individual acts of support.

> You find your attitude to other shopworkers changes once you've been on a shop-floor yourself. Like yesterday I was walking round a shop and I knocked something down and I picked it up straightaway because I'd hope someone else would do that for me. And your're more sympathetic with someone at a till and accept problems that arise 'cause they could happen to you in a similar situation.

Interview with a Sales Assistant, Company B, Central London, September, 1990.

41. Interview with a Senior Sales Assistant, Company B, Central London, September, 1990.

42. Interview with a Sales Assistant, Company B, Sussex, July, 1990.

43. Interview with a Sales Assistant, Company B, Central London, September, 1990.

44. Interview with an Area Manager, Company A, Central London, May, 1990.

chapter eight

conclusion

'A foolish consistency is the hob-goblin of little minds'

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

'The finely grained arrangements of self-regulation operative today must be countered by more sustained, organized, and multi-frontal counter-pressures, pressures that interrogate established definitions and intrusions of necessity, truth, normality, utility, and goodness while they identify and strive to reconstitute the larger institutional imperatives that drive the politics of normalization. For a profileration of deviations, defects, discrepancies, abnormalities, perversities, and sicknesses is not equivalent to the flowering of diversity: these are the regular means by which individuality is crushed and deformed under the star of the normal individual'.

- William E. Connolly

'And we're never gonna survive unless we get a little crazy'

- Seal

This thesis has explored the discursive construction of work-based subjectivity and identity. It has sought to analyse both theoretically and empirically how people are 'made up' at work, first, by creating a theoretical framework for exploring the discursive production of work-based subjectivities and identities, and second, by deploying this framework to examine the production of new work identities and the construction of particular work-based subjects in a specific service industry.

The organization of the thesis has reflected this two-fold division: the first part of the thesis (chapters two, three and four) involved the delineation of certain limitations in traditional approaches to the analysis of work-identity within sociology and social theory. It also

attempted to build a tentative theoretical framework for analysing the discursive construction of work-based identity and subjectivity. In the second part of the thesis (chapters five, six and seven), the theoretical framework developed in part one was deployed to examine the construction of new work identities and the production of particular work-based subjects in contemporary British retailing. Thus, in part two of the thesis, the retailing sector functioned as a 'case study' for exploring how people are 'made up' at work in the present.

Chapter one of the thesis acted as an introduction, outlining the parameters of the argument contained within the main body of the text. The chapter set the scene for the central focus of the thesis by indicating that the world of paid work and employment was undergoing something of an 'identity crisis'.

In this chapter, it was argued that developments such as the increasingly global organization of production and exchange, and the growing predominance of services within contemporary western societies, had exposed the 'constructedness' of ostensibly stable and unified economic identities, revealing their culturally and historically malleable - and, thus, contingent - character. However, while these developments had served to unhinge apparently stable economic identities and work-based subjectivities, they had also opened up the possibility of new articulations - for the construction of new 'economic' identities and the production of new work-based subjects. The contradictory nature of this contemporary 'identity crisis', it was argued, testified to the centrality of the notion of 'dislocation': if an established identity was never simply a self-contained, self-regulating totality, then every identity must be *dislocated* in so far as it depends upon an outside which both denies that identity and provides its conditions of possibility at one and the same time. Thus, any established identity is an inherently *unstable* achievement, dependent upon its ability - its relational power - to define difference whilst at the same time being vulnerable to those entities it defines as 'other' to overturn, subvert and resist the definitions applied to them. In other words, if every identity is dislocated to the extent that it relies upon a 'constitutive outside' that simultaneously affirms and denies that identity, then it follows that the effects of dislocation could never be *unambiguous*. If, on the one hand they threaten or overturn established identities, on the other, they provide the foundations upon which new identities may be established.

Focusing upon the dislocatory effects generated by the growth of service employment in modern western societies, the chapter went on to argue that rather than representing the extension of manual industrial labour, as some had argued, much contemporary servicing work could be seen to involve a complex imbrication of work and non-work identity. Because most servicing work involved a direct relationship between service consumers and service producers, the traditional separation between 'production' and 'consumption' relations characteristic of manufacturing employment no longer held. In other words, because the shift to service employment involved a modification in the worker's relationship with non-work activity then there was no longer the same identity - the worker - in a new situation, but rather a new identity. Thus, while the expansion of service employment had problematized the identity of 'work', conceptualized through the language of manufacturing, it had also opened up the possibility of new articulations at work - for the production of different work-based identities and for the construction of new work-based subjects.

At the same time, however, it was also argued that if the shift to services was in the process of undermining certain established boundaries between work and leisure and of producing more complex, 'hybrid' identities then the forms of analysis deployed to make sense of these shifts would need to reflect this 'hybridity'. Because an important element of the production and consumption of a service was seen to be the quality of the service interaction, it was suggested that service work was not amenable to a purely 'productionist' analysis but needed to be conceptualised in terms of *cultural relations*. Similarly, if the dynamics of consumer culture were seen to provide the 'constitutive outside' of contemporary servicing work, then the identity of that work, it was argued, could not be understood outside of its relationship with the force antagonizing it. In other words, if the dislocatory effects generated by the growth of services had established a new identity for 'work' as an object of analysis, they had also initiated the need for new approaches to understanding that object.

Having outlined the importance of the concept of 'dislocation' for understanding the contemporary construction of economic identities and work-based subjectivities, the chapter went on to delineate the project of the thesis in the light of this discussion. The thesis was conceived of as an attempt to analyse, both theoretically and empirically, the discursive

production of work-based subjectivity and identity.

As indicated above, the thesis divides into two parts. Part one was concerned with outlining certain limitations in traditional approaches to the analysis of work identity within sociology and social theory and with constructing a tentative framework for charting the discursive construction of work-based subjectivity and identity. Chapter two initiated this first part of the thesis.

The chapter began by delineating and critically examining the three most prominent approaches to the study of work-based subjectivity and identity within sociology - namely those derived from marxism, neo-weberian sociology and symbolic interactionism. It then went on to assess the explanatory reach of these three 'sociologies', concentrating, in particular, upon the theory of 'the subject' contained within each of them.

Dominating sociological analyses of work identity and subjectivity, it was argued, had been the marxist problematic of alienation, where the oppressive structure of capitalist relations of production was deemed to have alienated 'Man' (*sic*) from 'his' (*sic*) 'species being' as a creative labourer. Because 'complete' human persons were recognised as coming in to being only with the destruction of capitalism/ideology and the building of communism/socialism, subjectivity was represented as having no force or weight under 'present conditions' of 'alienation'. However, as a consequence of this form of overdetermined analysis and explanation, it was suggested, no room was left for, and no weight assigned to, individual and/or group experience, meaning and action. In other words, the subject was completely absorbed by the structure.

In opposition to the 'objectivist' fantasy of 'alienation', it was argued, neo-weberian analyses deployed an 'action frame of reference' to the study of work identity. By focusing upon 'actors own definitions of the situations in which they are engaged' the neo-weberians argued that no systematic relationship could be found between the degree to which a worker's occupation was 'objectively alienating' and the degree to which a worker identified with the job he/she performed.

However, while the neo-weberians claimed to have installed an active subject at the heart of their project, thus seemingly overcoming the structural determinism they deplored in orthodox marxism, the subject of their analyses also appeared to be exclusively sub-jected to social

formations. Despite their eloquent testimonies to the 'action frame of reference' it was suggested that the neo-weberians had in practice adopted an extreme weberian position of distinguishing sociology from history and had defined the project of sociological analysis as the construction of a-historical 'ideal types'. Thus, their 'subject' was basically the product of the objective work and community situation which he/she inhabited. In other words, different forms of identity were 'read off' from structural factors. As a consequence, the neo-weberian subject, just as much as the marxian 'alienated worker', was divorced from social action. Once again, it was argued, a total determinism governed human activity so that the subject was completely absorbed by the structure.

In contrast to both marxist and neo-weberian analyses, it was suggested, the symbolic interactionists placed the 'self' in social action at the centre of their sociological project. Yet, while interactionism placed a great deal of emphasis upon 'social life' and 'identity' as the active accomplishment of purposive, knowledgeable actors, the status of the 'social' in interactionist thought was shown to be extremely limited. Because the 'social' was mainly equated with small interactional groupings and the 'generalized other', interactionism offered no explanation of the broader society as a differentiated and historically located phenomenon.

Similarly, although interactionists identified language as an impersonal system and therefore as in some senses as a 'macro' structure, they were unable to provide an adequate account of the formation of processes at a macro level or of the relation between such macro structurings and the micro processes of everyday interaction. The 'macro', it was argued, occupies a posited but unexplicated postion within interactionist thought. Thus, while interactionism set out to overcome dualistic thinking within sociology, it ended up replicating such dualisms.

Because interactionism failed to engage with the language of structure and was unable, consequently, to explore the workings of structural power inequalities, it could not begin to consider how social divisions and conflicts were inscribed in the self through social organization and how these limited the scope for consciously chosen actions by individuals in the social group.

By gravitating between one or other pole of the dualism between action and structure,

individual and productive apparatus, these three sociological approaches had tended to produce a uni-dimensional account of work-based subjectivity and identity. The subjects of these analyses, it was argued, were either completely absorbed by structure or had no structural identity at all. One way or another the subject remained firmly centred; ambiguity, contingency and 'dislocation' were nowhere to be found.

Having outlined certain limitations in the conceptualization of subjectivity and identity proffered by these three sociological 'schools', the chapter went on to indicate how the debilitating binary oppositions that had characterised these analyses might be overcome through the concept of 'discourse'.

As chapter two indicated, although the concept of 'discourse' is concerned with the production of knowledge through language, discourse itself is produced through social practice: *discursive practice*, or the practice of making meaning. Because all social practices involve the production of meaning, it was argued, all such practices are therefore discursive. In this sense, 'discourse' could not be reduced to a synonym for 'speech and writing' but was always a dimension of material practices. Thus, the concept of discourse effectively negated prevalent oppositions between language and social practice and between meaning and human action.

The chapter went on to argue that because the knowledge produced in discourse constituted a form of power over those who were known by and through it, when that knowledge was deployed in practice it produced certain sorts of 'subject'. In other words, discourse constituted the 'subject position' of the social agent. Forms of power 'worked', it was argued, by constructing and maintaining the forms of 'subjectivity' most appropriate to a given type of discursive practice. In this way, an intimate relationship was established between discourse, knowledge, power and subjectivity.

Rather than positing some core or essence to the human subject which remained identical throughout all the changes the subject underwent, the 'discursive turn' proposed that forms of subjectivity and identity be treated as historical categories rather than as empirical referents that existed independently of their constitution in discourse and the powers exercised over them. In other words, instead of maintaining some originary essence outside of their dominant discursive articulation, forms of subjectivity and identity were shown to be historically and

culturally malleable; the 'space' of the subject was therefore that of 'dislocation'.

Having indicated at the end of chapter two that subjectivity and identity are constituted in discourse, chapter three attempted to trace how the category of 'worker' had been constructed at different historical junctures through its positioning within a variety of discourses of work reform. A central argument of this chapter was that changes in the way of conceptualising, documenting and acting upon the internal world of the business enterprise actively created new ways for people 'to be' work.

In the first part of chapter three, it was suggested that rather than being some transcendental *a priori* category representing the essence of every direct producer, the identity of the 'worker' had been differentially constituted in the changing practices of governing economic life. 'Government' in this sense was defined as a discursive activity aiming to shape, guide or effect the conduct of some person or persons. Different governmental rationalities - attempts to invent and exercise different types of rule - were seen to be closely linked to conceptions and attributes of those to be governed. In other words, particular rationalities of government involved the construction of specific ways for people to be. They actively 'made up' people.

However, because government was conceived of as a 'conduct of conduct', it presupposed rather than annulled the capacity of individuals as agents. The relation between government and governed depended upon an unstable conjuncture because that relation passed through the manner in which governed individuals were willing to exist as particular subjects. In other words, the relation between government and governed was one of 'dislocation'.

Having indicated how the government of economic life accross the twentieth century had entailed a variety of attempts to shape and regulate the relations that individuals have with society's productive apparatus, the chapter went on to delineate the ways in which people are 'made up' at work by focusing upon the contemporary management discourse of 'Excellence' and its relationship to the political rationality of 'Enterprise'.

Within the discourse of 'Excellence', it was argued, the internal world of the business organization was imagined as an arena in which productivity was to be improved, production and service quality assured, 'flexibility' enhanced and innovation developed through the active engagement of the self-fulfilling impulses of all the organization's members. 'Excellence'

represented the worker first and foremost as an individual in search of meaning in work, and desirous of achieving fulfilment through work: work was characterised not as a painful obligation imposed upon individuals, nor as an activity only undertaken by people for the fulfilment of their instrumental needs and satisfactions. Work was now imagined as a means to self-fulfilment, and the road to company profit was also conceptualised as the path to individual self-development and growth.

'Excellent' companies, it was argued, were those that cultivated 'Enterprising' subjects - autonomous, self-regulating productive individuals: persons that calculated about themselves and worked upon themselves in order to become better selves. Governing in an 'Excellent' manner was therefore grounded in the way individuals governed themselves: the discourse of 'Excellence' could be seen to brook no opposition between the mode of self-presentation required of managers and workers and the ethics of the personal self. Becoming a better worker was represented as the same thing as becoming a more virtuous person - a better self. The values of self-realization, of personal responsibility and self-management were represented as both economically desirable and personally seductive.

However, the discourse of 'Excellence' was shown to act not only as a 'relay' between the self-regulating capacities of human subjects and the contemporary goals of industry, but also to play a vital 'translating role' between the government of the business enterprise and the politico-ethical objectives of neo-liberal government in the U.K. Through deployment of the vocabulary of 'Enterprise', contemporary management discourse established connections and symmetries between the concerns of owners and managers of capital to maximise the performance and productivity of their organizations, political concerns about the government of the productive, moral and cultural life of the 'Nation', and techniques for the government of the subject. 'Excellence', it was argued, helped link these together into a 'functioning network'.

For both 'Excellence' and for neo-liberal political rationality in the U.K., economic and moral revival was seen to necessitate the construction of an appropriate 'culture of Enterprise': 'Enterprise' was their 'ideological fantasy'. Both of these projects, it was argued, were engaged in struggle against 'lack of Enterprise', which they conceptualised as a fundamental cause of social antagonism, a disease spreading through the social body destroying 'initiative', 'innovation', 'creativity' and the like. This debilitating 'lack' could only be overcome, and

social harmony restored, it was argued, through the promotion and development of 'Enterprise'. In other words, the symbolic enemy - 'bureaucracy' and its associated evils - could only be defeated by summoning up and unleashing the forces of 'Enterprise', and in particular, the powers of the 'Enterprising self'.

In both of these respective projects, it was argued, 'lack of Enterprise' appeared to be a foreign body introducing corruption into the pure, sound, social fabric. However, in effect, 'lack of Enterprise' was shown to be akin to a 'symptom', the point at which the immanent social antagonism erupted on to the surface of the social, the point at which it became apparent that the organization/society 'didn't work'. Thus, 'lack of Enterprise' was basically the means for 'Excellence' and for neo-liberalism, of taking into account, of representing their own impossibility. It was the expression of the ultimate impossibility of their respective projects - of the 'dislocation' that prevented the organization/society from achieving its full identity as a closed, homogeneous totality. Thus, chapter three concluded by re-iterating the constitutive role of 'dislocation' in the discursive construction of work-based subjectivity and identity.

Chapter four argued that if 'making up people' at work could only be understood in terms of 'dislocation', then a partial framework for thinking about the discursive construction of work-based subjectivity and identity should consist of two mutually constitutive vectors. The first of these vectors was that of 'labelling from above': 'making up people' in this sense involved tracing the ways in which the category of the 'worker' or the 'manager' was differentially constituted in the practices of governing economic life. Different from this, but equally important, was the vector of 'the actual behaviour of those so-labelled': 'making up people' in this sense involved tracing what those subjected to particular discourses made or did with them.

Although at first sight, this framework appeared to be more dualistic than 'dislocated', these vectors were shown to be mutually constitutive, rather than two fully constituted objectivities. The subject of the second vector had no 'proper' place of its own. It operated within a space delineated by, but not equivalent to, the first vector. Thus, it did not manifest itself through its own autonomous representations but only in relation to its ways of 'using' or 'consuming', representations and technologies emanating 'from above'.

In addition to delineating the processes through which work-based subjectivity and identity was produced 'from above', as it were, it was also necessary to examine what people made or did with the discourses through which they were subjected. In chapter four, therefore, an attempt was made to conclude a tentative framework for charting the discursive construction of work-based subjectivity and identity by shifting attention away from the processes of 'labelling from above' outlined in chapter three and focusing instead upon ways of analysing the procedures of consumption of 'those so-labelled'.

The first part of the chapter described how the organization of work was increasingly structured around the character of the 'sovereign consumer' and charted the consequences of this development for the construction and regulation of work-based subjectivity and identity.

Having argued that an understanding of work-based subjectivity and identity in the present necessitated an exploration of 'the ways of operating ' of consumers, the second part of the chapter concentrated on delineating and critically examining various conceptualizations of consumer behaviour within the social sciences. It was suggested that representations of consumption circulating with the social sciences had tended to gravitate between the two extremes of 'structural pessimism' (i.e. the 'mass culture critique'), on the one hand, and a 'heady romanticism' (the'pleasures of consumption' thesis), on the other.

One way out of this pervasive dualism, the chapter argued, was provided by the work of Michel de Certeau. Through analysing procedures of consumption as 'everyday life', de Certeau disrupted the pessimistic logic of the mass culture critique and undermined the implicit voluntarism of the pleasures of consumption thesis. While consumption was still conceptualised as an active process on the part of 'consumers', it was also represented as a hidden activity because it was scattered across areas dominated by systems of production. Practices of consumption were therefore seen to have no 'proper' place of their own, but to operate within a space delineated by systems of production. Thus, the subject of consumption - the 'consumer' or 'user' - did not manifest itself through its own autonomous representations but only in relation to its ways of using representations 'from above'. For de Certeau, therefore, the relationship between 'production' and 'consumption' was one of 'dislocation'. The consumer's shape and effectivity were never fully guaranteed because the consumer was a 'lack in the structure'. There was the 'consumer' because 'production' never managed to fully

constitute itself as an 'objectivity'.

In the second part of the thesis (chapters five, six and seven) the fledgling framework developed in part one was deployed to examine the discursive construction of work-based subjectivity and identity in one particular service industry during the 1980s and early 1990s. The retailing industry was chosen as the site for this analysis because it was seen to offer a particularly pertinent terrain of inquiry for charting the imbrication of work and consumption identities. It was suggested, for example, that as the quality of the service relationship was represented as an increasingly important source of value within contemporary British retailing, store managers and sales assistants within the industry had been encouraged to assemble and market aspects of their experience and identity as consumers in their paid work of providing 'quality service'. Through the use of human technologies of interpersonal and emotion management, managers and workers were being trained to 'imagine' themselves in their customers' shoes and encouraged to offer them the sort of service they themselves would ideally like to receive in a shop. Thus, in part two of the thesis the British retailing industry functioned as a 'case study' for exploring how people are 'made up' at work in the present.

Chapter five initiated the second part of the thesis by providing a rationale for focusing upon the U.K. retailing sector as a case study for 'making up' people at work. In particular, the chapter indicated that the increasing importance attached by retailers to the cultural relations of consumption in the pursuit of profitibility had repercussions for the ways in which the work-based subject of retailing was produced and regulated. The chapter began by delineating and examining the cultural contours of retailing, indicating the importance of the retail sector to the mode of existence and reproduction of contemporary consumer culture. It then went on to describe some of the major 'logistical' developments that had allowed retailers to delineate, monitor, and construct - to 'make up' - the consumer more intricately than ever before and to expand considerably the range of 'mass produced individualities' available for consumption. It was suggested that these developments - which signalled the move to a more 'flexible system of accumulation' within the retailing sector - could be seen to involve, at one and the same time, the progressive culturalisation of retailing. Lastly, the chapter considered some of the subjectivizing aspects of contemporary retail change, both for consumers, and increasingly, for

retail employees. It was suggested that as the 'quality emotional labour' of customer service became an increasingly important source of value to British retailers, so government of the internal world of the retail enterprise was shifting away from a reliance upon systems of formal direction as to how work should be performed towards systems of indirect normative regulation, or 'government at a distance'. Here, an onus upon direct control was transformed into an emphasis on 'culturally' enduced self-control. Thus, the government of the retail enterprise now came to operate through the 'soul' of the individual employee. The chapter therefore concluded by arguing that attempts by retailers to 'make up' the consumer involved the construction of new work identities and the production of new work-based subjects within the contemporary retailing organization.

Having established a rationale for focusing upon the retailing sector as a case study, chapters six and seven drew upon empirical evidence from a number of British high-street retail organizations to explore how people are 'made up' at work in contemporary retailing. In keeping with the framework developed in part one of the thesis, chapter six corresponded to the vector of 'labelling from above', while chapter seven explored the 'actual behaviour of those so-labelled'.

The focus in chapter six was upon delineating and examining the 'programmatic' aspirations of senior management personnel in a number of multiple retail enterprises. The chapter attempted to describe the various discursive practices through which these aspirations were 'operationalised' and, as a result, new ways for people to be at work were created. It was argued that the internal world of the retail enterprise was being re-imagined through the discourse of 'Excellence/Enterprise' as a place where productivity was to be enhanced, customers' needs satisfied, 'quality service' guaranteed, 'flexibility' assured and creative innovation fostered through the active engagement of the 'self-motivating' and 'self-regulating' capacities of all the organization's members. In other words, changes in the government of the retail enterprise had led to the construction of new work identities and to the production of new work-based subjects. Store managers and sales assistants within contemporary British retailing, it was argued, were being discursively re-imagined as 'Enterprising' subjects: self-regulating productive individuals whose sense of self-worth was inextricably tied to the 'excellent' performance of their paid work and thus to the success of the organizatio

employing them.

Having outlined the process of 'labelling from above' within contemporary British retailing in chapter six, chapter seven went on to examine the 'actual behaviour of those so-labelled'. It was suggested that by focusing upon the 'tactics of consumption' of those living the category of 'store manager' and 'sales assistant' it became possible to expose the limits of work-based subjectification within the reailing industry.

The chapter began by indicating that while the discourse of 'Excellence/ Enterprise' preferred a *tabula rasa* upon which to write its compositions, it actually sought to inscribe itself upon human material with particular biographies and to institute itself within organizations with specific histories. In other words, 'Excellence/Enterprise' acted upon an 'always already' split and differentiated human population and upon organizations where the structuring of work relations, for example, already involved the fracturing of collections of employees around which often highly-charged 'friend-enemy' groupings had emerged. The chapter went on to argue that because the establishment of 'Excellence/ Enterprise' as an 'objective presence' was based on exclusion, the traces of that exclusion were always somehow present. Beneath the 'monotheistic' privileging of that discourse within contemporary retailing organizations, the vestiges of other, now 'invisible' discourses survived. Through the presence of these 'scattered practices', it was argued, an 'uncodeable difference' insinuated itself into the internal world of the retail enterprise, denying the happy relation the organization would like to have with itself.

In the second part of the chapter, the differing 'tactical trajectories' of store managers and sales assistants were traced. To a large extent, it was suggested, store managers were able to practice 'popular tactics' more profitably than sales assistants because of their greater relative power within the workplace. Indeed, the tactical utilisation of their own staff was often a key element in managers' attempts to create space for themselves at work while simultaneously appearing to be at one with the 'strategic gaze'. For sales assistants on the other hand, an inferior access to 'positional goods' within the retail enterprise elicited an 'increased deviousness, fantasy and laughter'. Their tactical activity of 'day-dreaming', 'skiving', and 'ironic detachment' was 'transgressive' in character - indicative of the silent manoeuvrings of

'users' who maintained 'their reserve in private and without the knowledge of the masters'.

While it was apparent that both 'store managers' and 'sales assistants' 'used' the technologies of 'Enterprise/Excellence' for ends far removed from those inscribed within them 'from above', the 'private' nature of their 'tactics of consumption' could not evade an encounter with the Foucauldian world of 'normalization'; the pathos of 'distance' that their 'private' ethic of individuality articulated was shown to be an anachronism in a world of 'normalization' because it ended up supporting that which it sought to refute. Ironic detachment, it was argued, left untouched the level on which technologies of normalization structured the social reality itself. In other words, even if 'managers' and 'sales assistants' didn't take 'Enterprise/Excellence' seriously, even if they attempted to keep a certain ironic distance from its claims, they were still reproducing it through their practical involvement in those technologies within which 'Enterprise' was inscribed. 'Cynical distance', 'laughter' and 'ironic detachment' were, so to speak, always already 'part of the game'.

Although the presence of 'tactics of consumption' within the internal world of the retail enterprise attested to the impossibility of abolishing antagonism and thus of creating the 'organic' organizational identity envisaged by the discourse of 'Enterprise/Excellence', this did not signal the failure or impending collapse of the latter discourse within contemporary British retailing. Far from negating the normalizing power of 'Enterprise/Excellence', 'impossibility' worked within that power from the beginning; the impossibility of government reproduced and justified the attempt to govern. It was therefore quite possible to argue that discourses and technologies of normalization only knew they were working when they were partially successful. Thus, the 'lack of fit' between the programmatic aspirations of 'labelling from above' and the 'actual behaviour of those so-labelled' did not undermine the power of strategic rationality. Rather, 'labelling from above' operated through the creation of abnormalities it then had to treat and reform. In other words, when there was resistance or failure to achieve stated aims, this was then construed as evidence of the need to reinforce and extend the power of strategic rationality.

appendix i

methodology

Introduction

My academic interest in the issue of work identity first developed during my years as an undergraduate and postgraduate student at Durham University (from 1983-1988). As a result of involvement with the university's Work and Employment Research Unit, I became interested in the effects of economic restructuring upon those industries in the North East of England traditionally associated with strong forms of (masculine) occupational identity - coalmining, shipbuilding and steelworking. In particular, I became interested in whether any distinct forms of work-based identity would emerge in the apparent replacements for these disappearing industries - in the ostensible regional 'growth' sectors of retailing, hotel and catering and so forth - with their very different labour processes and workforce composition.

While it was obvious that the forms of occupational culture and community associated with the declining sectors were not to be found in these expanding servicing industries, my own experience working for three and a half years as a part-time sales assistant in a supermarket chain led me to question the prevalent assumption that *no* 'real' form of work-based identity was likely in the 'deskilled', 'flexibilized', and largely non-unionised, world of the retail shopfloor, for example. After all, I had made most of my closest teenage friends working in that supermarket (rather than at school); for me, and for many others in the shop - both full-time and part-time, male and female, (though invariably 'young', 16-30) - work and non-work life were virtually inseparable; they flowed together. "We all work at X" was a standard reply to questions concerning the origin of our friendships. "X", the shop, the company, played a constitutive role in who and what we were, in our identity as a 'group' - the "X crowd" that gatecrashed your party - and as 'individuals'.

Although my own experience as a part-time 'student' worker in retailing could in no way be considered 'representative', it wasn't unique. And yet it was hard to find any acknowledgement of this form of experience in most of the British sociological literature dealing with questions of work-based identity. While this was certainly a matter of 'theory', as chapter three of the thesis has attempted to make clear, it was also a matter of methodology. Traditional approaches to these questions appeared to have been conducted at a very high level

of generality through the deployment of highly structured attitude surveys. As a result, little room had been assigned to individual and group experience, meaning and action. Active processes of identification were subsumed under the weight of objectivist analyses.

In certain respects, then, the desire to make 'sociological' sense of my own work experience in retailing has played an important role in determining the methodology deployed in this thesis. While acknowledging that questionnaire surveys are very valuable in producing large scale aggregated data it must be admitted that they are severely limited in dealing with social action and with lived practices; that is, with the issues of central importance to a study of human behaviour in organizations: meaning; interpretation; culture; history; power and the like. Such positivist methodologies structure, predefine and as a consequence constrain the areas of research interest. As Sayer (1992: 246-247), for example, has argued, questionnaire surveys and similar 'extensive' methodologies lack 'explanatory reach' because the relations they 'discover' are only 'formal, concerning similarity, dissimilarity, correlation and the like, rather than causal, structural and substantial, i.e. relations of connection'. Causality, for instance, cannot easily be determined because 'actual connections and interactions between objects are often recorded in aggregates in which the specific individuals entering into the relations cannot be identified'. As Sayer (1992: 245) suggests, it is more open-ended, intensive, qualititative methods that have a sensitivity to meanings and values and offer the most suitable, if still not unproblematic, means of exploring and understanding human behaviour in organizations.

Following the logic of this argument, the thesis has attempted to investigate work-based subjectivity and identity as components of discursive practices using intensive qualitative methods of semi-structured and unstructured, in-depth, corroborated interviews, combined with non-participant observation. While such a methodology is not without its explanatory costs - the most obvious being its lack of 'representativeness' and 'generalizability' - it has the distinct advantage of both allowing the researcher to observe organizational practices at first hand, and of providing the researcher with the opportunity to learn from respondents what the different significances of circumstances are for them.

the research design

Because the theoretical framework structuring the thesis stressed that the discursive construction of work-based subjectivity and identity in contemporary British retailing necessitated an examination of both 'labelling from above', as well as the 'actual behaviour of those so labelled', this placed certain restrictions upon the choice of 'intensive' methods deployed in empirical research. While initially favouring an extensive period of 'participant observation' in one store, it soon became apparent that such an approach would severely curtail my ability to obtain adequate information concerning, for example, the governmental aspirations, objectives and activities of senior management personnel.

Rather than locating myself exclusively at any one level within an organizational hierarchy, it was important for me to be able to move between different levels and functions if I was to be able to do justice to my own theoretical aspirations. While this meant that gaining access would inevitably be a more complicated and 'political' process than if I had simply 'taken a job' in a particular store, the potential benefits in terms of increased 'explanatory reach' appeared worth the risks involved.

Instead of relying exclusively upon 'participant observation', I opted to adopt a more flexible 'case study' approach tracing how certain categories of person were 'made up' at work in a small number of multiple retail organizations in the south east of England (as I indicated above, because the focus of the research was upon 'depth' explanations and not upon 'representativeness', the 'quantity' of case studies undertaken was largely irrelevant). This approach involved utilising in-depth, semi-structured and unstructured interviews with a range of staff from head office executive to sales assistant level, combined with non-participant observation of a variety both of formal organizational practices - from management briefing sessions in-store to Area induction and training sessions - and informal 'shopfloor' practices.

negotiating access

The initial stages of empirical research involved identifying the most appropriate companies

to target for access. These companies were selected on the basis of information obtained from an 'extensive' survey of, among other things, trade journals, newspaper articles, and company reports. In particular, attention was focused upon the language used to describe organizational aspirations and activities within these texts, and upon reported changes in organizational structure or culture, as well as in the management of 'human resources' (in effect, the aim was to target 'leading edge' companies within the sector). Although British retailing can be disaggregated into a number of broad varieties of business, it soon became apparent from this initial survey that a common 'vocabulary of motive' operated throughout the industry and that as a result quite a large number of companies appeared to be potentially fruitful sites for intensive research.

This intial survey, and the requests for access that followed, were conducted in mid-late 1989. By that time, the so-called 'boom years' of the Thatcher decade were well and truly over and the British economy was once again officially 'in recession'. The down-turn in thc U.K. housing market and in consumer spending generally was beginning to cause problems for Britain's high street retailers - especially 'lifestyle' stars of the early eighties like Burtons, Next, Laura Ashley and SockShop, all of whom had expanded rapidly on the wave of the consumer credit boom - and it soon became apparent from the replies I received to my initial letters to target companies that gaining access during a recession was not going to be easy. A number of companies were quite blunt about this: whereas access would have been possible a year or two earlier, they suggested, current trading conditions necessitated some 'tough decisions' being made and this was not something they were prepared to have observed at close quarters by an outsider, regardless of 'confidentiality'.

In total, thirty retailing organizations were approached between September, 1989 and February, 1990 of which eight agreed to an exploratory meeting to discuss the project in further detail. These latter discussions invariably involved my meeeting one or more senior executives - usually either the personnel director, director of human resources, or head of training - and presenting an outline of my research to them. This was then followed by a question and answer session in which the first query from the company side was always "What's in it for us ?".

The 'political' pressure exerted upon me at these meetings was not inconsiderable: as an

inexperienced post-graduate researcher negotiating with up to four senior executives on their 'territory' I was continually - if politely - encouraged to 'see things their way' and to shift the emphasis of my project to suit their own particular interests. Luckily, the polysemic qualities of language came to my rescue. By articulating my interests through the vocabulary of 'Excellence' - indicating that I was interested in corporate 'culture', employee identity and attitudes, in 'customer care' and the 'quality' of interactive service - I was able to project an apparent affinity between my own 'social scientific' research and what they considered to be their more 'practical' business concerns and needs.

On the whole, these exploratory meetings served to generate a not inconsiderable amount of information, all of which proved useful to my project even though some of the companies in question did, in the end, take matters no further.

Overall, negotiating access proved a very complex and time consuming activity. Although initial contacts were made in September 1989, I did not set foot inside a store until May, 1990. Some companies demanded up to three exploratory meetings before reaching a decision; others requested incredibly detailed written information concerning the proposed logistics of the research. Every company required a commitment from me to provide feedback once the research was complete, either in the form of a written report, or in the shape of a seminar to senior management - as well as guarantees of anonymity and confidentiality for all staff and to the company as a whole All insisted that neither the identity of the company, nor that of the individuals participating in the research, were to be revealed in any academic or other publication arising from the study.

In the end, some form of involvement was obtained from six of the eight companies with whom I had held exploratory meetings. Two companies (**A** and **B**) granted near 'full' access at all organizational levels, as well as access to limited documentary materials; two others (**C** and **D**) granted a limited number of in-depth taped interviews with senior mangement staff, normally those concerned with personnel and training issues, as well as limited access to documentary materials; and two others offered a one-off, in-depth taped interview with a senior management employee concerned with 'human resource' issues. In addition to this company-based research activity, a taped group discussion was also conducted with various members of

the shop worker's union USDAW and with members of the Service Workers Action and Advisory Project (SWAAP).

Overall, 100 individual interviews, mostly taped,were conducted with retail employees from senior management to sales assistant level in companies **A - D**, and a further seven individuals from USDAW and SWAAP were involved in the taped group discussion. The first of these interviews was conducted in January, 1990 and the last in January, 1991. (Logistical details of the research conducted at companies **A-D**, as well as of the USDAW /SWAAP group discussion, can be found at the end of this appendix).

the case studies

Although information gleaned from the in-depth interviews with management at companies **C** and **D** - as well as material gathered from the other interviews, the exploratory meetings, and from documentary sources - is central to the storyline of the thesis, it is the research undertaken at companies **A** and **B** that forms the basis of my empirical examination of 'making up' people in retailing. **A** and **B** comprise my 'case studies' because only they provided the degree of access necessary for exploring both 'labelling from above' and the 'actual behaviour of those so-labelled'.

Research in these two companies followed a very similar trajectory. After obtaining access, I spent one month in each organization interviewing various management staff at head office, regional office, and area office level, and analysing documentary evidence concerning, for example, overall business strategy, logistical operations, and employee relations policies and practices.

Having built up a picture of senior managment's aspirations in these companies and the technologies and practices being deployed to operationalise these aspirations, I then spent a period of three months in each of these organizations at store level. Over this six month period, intensive research took place in a total of eight individual stores (four of these stores were staffed by only four or five people at any one time). During this time, I spent an average of five days each week conducting in-depth interviews with employees, both management and sales staff, as well as observing both formal and informal organizational practices within the

store. However, even when located 'in-store' I was still in contact with head office. While this was largely a matter of senior management 'tracking' my movements around their stores such contact also provided me with an opportunity to corroborate information obtained 'in-store' concerning aspects of organizational policy and practice.

Formal interviews with senior management at **A** and **B** were conducted during working hours. These lasted between one and two and a half hours, and almost all them were taped. As I indicated earlier, the aim of these discussions was to help me to get a reasonably clear idea of the programmatic aspirations of senior management and of the technologies and practices being instituted to operationalise these aspirations. I was less interested in the subjective experience of 'work' of these respondents. In contrast to the store-based interviews, therefore, interviews with senior management tended to be more structured and 'formal', concentrating on issues of corporate strategy and the like. Thus, during these discussions respondents were asked about the overall goals and objectives of the company for which they worked, about the mechanisms being deployed to achieve these, and about the perceived importance of staff commitment and involvement to the success of the company. However, this formal and 'businesslike' approach was not primarily an effect of my research design, it was part and parcel of senior management expectations of what constituted a 'proper' interview. In other words, in their eyes a less structured and more 'personal' interview was a reflection of lack of professionalism on my part. My initial attempts to 'personalise' the interview process - to alleviate the strain of feeling out of my depth as much as anything else - appeared to be seen by most senior staff (mainly, but not exclusively, male) as evidence of a weakness of character, and indicative of a lack of clarity of purpose.

As I indicated earlier, this initial period of research amongst senior management staff was designed to get a handle on the process of 'labelling from above' in my case study companies. At the end of this period, I then went 'in-store' to gather information on the 'actual behaviour of those so-labelled' - in this case store managers and sales assistants.

If interviewing senior management had made me feel self-concious, inadequate and somewhat 'on display', my presence in-store initially had quite similar effects upon both store management and sales staff. Although I had been allowed considerable choice in selecting the

stores I would visit rather than being told where to go by senior management, and although head office had informed the store managers concerned that I was a student conducting a piece of research for my own purposes and had no connection with the company, I was initially greeted with great suspicion by all sections of the workforce. For some store managers I was nothing more than a surveillance device from head office sent to assess their 'leadership' style:

> *I can't believe it. Its incredibly disconcerting having you around. I keep looking over my shoulder all the time. Now I know what my staff must feel like when they see me walking around the store!*

For most sales staff I was obviously a 'management spy'. Not only that, for some I was, first and foremost, a *white* management spy. In other words, the initial reaction to my presence tended to replicate certain well-established friend-enemy relations within store - between management and staff, between 'black' and 'white' staff and so forth, or between the store and 'the centre'.

Although this initial suspicion outlived my first fumbling attempts to assure collected groups of employees and management that head office had no vested interests in my project, and was even exacerbated by my own symbolic errors - sitting exclusively at 'the management table' for my first two 'rest breaks' in one store; hanging around the tills with a notepad and pen in another; talking to store managers about people I knew at head office - after a while my presence appeared to become an (if sometimes grudgingly) accepted part of shop-life. Certain individuals - often key 'opinion formers' amongst certain groups of employees - would gradually grow curious and begin a conversation and, as a result, tell their colleagues that, basically I was 'alright'. While being 'alright' with everyone all of the time was completely impossible, I usually became temporarily 'alright' with enough people to build a picture of the main dynamics within the store. In other words, with nurtured schizophrenia and lots of luck, I managed to be everywhere and nowhere at the same time: sharing reminiscences of undergraduate life with a trainee manager; discussing the launch of KISS FM and the merits of Public Enemy with a young black sales assistant; watching Cameroon defeat Argentina in the World Cup with a Ugandan security guard; and discussing opportunities at the Open

University with a young sales assistant who wanted out of British retailing.

By the time that I began to conduct interviews with staff in-store, most people had at least some idea of who I was and why I was there, and usually at least one or more 'key informant' had emerged (depending on the size of the store) upon whom I could depend for information.

Although at first store management liked to suggest people I might want to talk to, after this intial element of intervention I was usually free to interview anyone I wished to, as long as they were prepared to talk to me. However, because interviews took place during working hours, often in a small, understaffed store with very limited space, store management always retained control over the location and timing of my interviews.

In contrast to the interviews conducted with senior management, store-based discussions with both management and sales staff tended to be quite 'chatty'. Although I do not want to underplay the problematic character of the interviewer-interviewee relation in general, and the particular ethical problems I faced as a young, white, male, middle-class researcher interviewing black, working-class women, middle-aged, working class men, middle-class asian women, and so on, my overriding concern in the interviews I conducted was to convey to the people whose co-operation I was seeking the fact that I did not intend to exploit either them or the information they gave me.

In order to facilitate the development of a relatively 'intimate' and non-hierarchical relationship with my respondents it was important to make several assurances to those being interviewed. First, an initial commitment was made that discussions were completely confidential. Although people often wished to know what others had said - managers about their staff , sales assistants on one department about sales assistsnts on another - I never repeated conversations. Second, respondents were also told that the interview was not of a conventional type where their competence was being judged. I stressed again, that I was not connected to the company in any way, shape, or form, and that I did not want to control and secure certain responses. Third, all respondents were given the choice as to whether the interview was taped or not. Although the very fact of being interviewed at work was a strange experience for most sales floor staff, almost all agreed to be taped, and after a few glances at the machine, and some hesitant intial responses to questions, they seemed to forget they were

being recorded.

As I mentioned earlier, interviews with both store management and sales assistants were conducted during working hours. They lasted between one hour and three and a half hours. Although management and sales staff were not asked identical questions, reflecting their differing 'status', responsibilities, and positional power within the organization and the store, both groups were questioned, for example, about their personal 'work' biography, their experience and views about employment relations within the company, about their job tasks, their relationship with customers, and about the relationship between their 'leisure' activities and domestic life, and their paid work.

A particularly important element of the interview process was to ask people to talk about what they defined as the 'crucial issues'. Although questionnaire surveys tend to exercise considerable control over research subjects and their responses by predefining the topics under consideration, the very opposite can, and often does, occur when qualitative methods are deployed: interviewees exert considerable influence over the nature and direction of the interview process. Occasionally interviews departed from what I considered to be centrally relevant issues. However, in retrospect, a number of apparent 'digressions' turned out to be of considerable interest. For example, one young, black woman gradually moved the interview away from a discussion of the relationship between her 'paid work' and 'leisure' and instead began asking *me* questions about what films and music I liked, and which clubs in London I went to. Although, at first, I felt the interview was getting dangerously sidetracked the discussion that resulted from this 'turn' in the interview - concerning Spike Lee's movie 'Do the Right Thing', about the reasons for Beats International being booed off the stage at the KISS FM launch, as to whether black and white should date etc - told me more about this woman's life and her attitude to her work and work colleagues than my earlier mode of questioning ever could.

Although these in-depth interviews provided a great deal of information about people and their experiences, they were re-inforced by other informal modes of research that were designed to explore the consistency of views and to pick up on issues that on reflection appeared to be problematic or contradictory. These semi-structured in-depth interviews were therefore combined with casual conversations with groups and individuals on the shopfloor, in

the canteen and 'around town' at break-times, and, occasionally, in the pub after work, and with the observation of formal and informal organizational practices - customer-staff interactions, 'skiving' in the warehouse, weekily training sessions, Quality Team meetings, and management briefings and so forth.

Taken together the methods deployed both 'in-store' and within the wider company arena were designed to enhace the overall aim of the project which was to analyse how certain categories of person are 'made up' at work in a small number of multiple retail organizations located in the south-east of England.

Company A

Company A is the main retail division of a corporation specialising in the production and marketing of health and beauty products. Although the corporation has recently attempted to broaden its interests, Company A has been the main contributor to overall group profits since at least 1986. Company A generated pre-tax profits of £190 million in 1990 on turnover of £2,268.9 million, representing gains of 25.8% and 8.9% respectively on 1989.

It is fair to say that A is among the most familiar sights in the high street, being one of the most visited retail locations in Britain. On average, 40% of the adult population of the U.K. visit one of A's stores in any two week period.

At the end of March, 1990, the chain comprised 1,051 outlets with an aggregate sales area of 53 million square feet. The division is split into two groups: small stores, of which there were 831, with a sales area of up 6,000 square feet, and large stores with sales area up to 46,000 square feet, of which there were 200 outlets. In 1990, the company had around 55,168 members of staff (although USDAW is recognised for grievance procedures in some branches it does not negotiate terms and conditions for retail staff). In the small stores the focus is very much on the 'core' business of health and beauty products. The large stores, while including these product ranges, carry a much wider range of other products. The chain is a market leader in many areas of its core business.

Despite this dominance, the chain had seen its performance in terms of sales and profits per square footage lag behind that of many other retailers; net margins were 5.3% in 1987 and 1988. In the last four years or so, therefore, senior management have focused upon improving performance dramatically.

By September, 1990, there were 9,500 EPoS tills handling more than 80% of sales, and the greater use of information technology, including a sophisticated Direct Product Profitability system, had facilitated better space utilisation and enhanced profitability. A has also undergone a programme of refurbishment and upgrading of stores. On the merchandise side, the company's policy has been to 'add value', and the development of the company's own brands has been at the centre of this. Many of the company's own products have been re-positioned

upmarket, and own brands now account for 41% of sales.

In tandem with these 'logistical' developments, the company instituted its Secure Shopping Strategy. Launched in 1989 the Secure Shopping Strategy was designed to improve the 'emotional proximity' between company and customers through the development of 'Quality Service'. Of central importance to this strategic objective was the introduction of the company's Quality Team programme into every area and department of the business. As part of its 'strategic plan' of 'empowering' sales-floor staff to provide 'quality service', A announced, in April, 1990, 500 redundancies amongst supervisory and middle-management staff in-stores.

As result of these developments productivity has risen quite considerably. In the company's interim 1991 report it was noted that in terms of underlying profit per square foot the company had almost doubled its productivity over the preceding three years. What made this improved performance more noteworthy - and led to Company A being hailed as a 'retail engineer' by City analysts - was that it had been achieved at a time when high street trading conditions had become increasingly difficult.

Research at company A was conducted between April and July, 1990. The research took place at the company's Head Office, at its Central London Area Office, its Central London Training Office, and in two stores in central London, one large, one small. A total of 52 in-depth interviews were conducted with members of staff during this period. Five repeat interviews were conducted.

Company B

Company B is the young womenswear division of large fashion retailing corporation X. The company employs around 3,000 staff operating in 269 outlets of varying size nationwide (like company A, USDAW is recognised for grievance procedures in some branches but does not negotiate terms and conditions for retail staff). In the financial year, 1989-1990, company B held a total of 4.1% of its target market of young women between 11-30 years of age.

While B has traditionally been one of the most profitable divisions of X - with dramatic

profit performance in the 'boom years' of 1984-1986 - increasingly difficult trading conditions combined with 'lifestyle' and demographic shifts have had profound effects upon its traditional customer base and thus upon sales volume and profitability. Between 1988 and 1989, for example, **B**'s pre-tax profits fell by 11%, and between 1989 and 1990, sales fell by an average of 9%.

This reduction in **B**'s traditional market has resulted in a continuous process of repositioning and modernization, with attention focused, in particular, upon tracking and responding to 'customer lifestyle requirements'. In recent years square footage has continually been reduced - by 4% in 1988/89 and by a similar amount again in 1990-1991 - while attempts have been made to broaden customer base through upgrading merchandise and store formats.

Overall, the company's stated aim has been to capture a greater share of the 25-29 year old market - a highly competitive market where **B** is in direct competition with two of its parent company's niche brands, as well as a host of other 'lifestyle' womenswear offerings - but without losing its share among the younger age cohort. The company sought to achieve this objective through its 'strategy' which was launched in March, 1990. In September, 1990, **X** announced that **B** and its menswear equivalent were to be merged. In effect, the merger was a 'womenswear takeover', as **B**'s senior management team headed the newly formed company, and **B**'s strategy was introduced to all menswear branches.

Research was conducted in Company **B** between August and November, 1990. The research took place in **B**'s Head Office, and in six of **B**'s stores in the South-East of England. Two of these stores were located in central London. A total of 42 individual members of staff were interviewed in-depth during this period. Six repeat interviews were conducted.

Company C

Company **C** produces and sells health and beauty products. Although the company operates more than 700 shops in 40 countries, with one third of these located in the U.K., it directly controls very few of the stores carrying its name; most of its outlets are franchised. In the U.K., for example, only 42 stores are run directly by the company. As a result, the

company employs very few people itself - around 2,000 members of staff - the rest are employed through franchisees.

In the year 1990-1991, strong overseas growth increased the company's interim pre-tax profit by 37%, from £6.69 million to £9.15 million (U.K. sales increased by only 1% during the same period), insulating it against the recession. Turnover grew to £63.2 million in the six months to August, 1991 when 16 shops were opened in the U.K. and 63 added overseas.

In the U.K., the company's 'mission statement' - or 'charter' - has focused upon reducing the dependence of the business on its charismatic managing director and chief executive and upon creating an organizational culture of 'accountability'. Central to this goal has been the institution of various mechanisms within the company designed to put responsibility for the success of the business upon the shoulders of each individual member of the company. The ideal envisaged by senior management in the company is for the devolution of as many responsibilities and functions as possible from head office to managers and staff in-store.

Research at Company C was conducted in January and October, 1990, and January, 1991. Three in-depth interviews, one taped, two noted, were conducted with management staff responsible for the development and implementation of employee relations and human resource policy within the company.

Company D

Company D is one of the U.K.'s leading retail organizations. Its variety store chain in the U.K. forms the core of the company's operations. The chain is distinctive in that it sells only own brand products. The company has a reputation for producing reliable results, even in difficult trading conditions, and for maintaining a healthy balance sheet. D has around 300 outlets in the U.K. Stores are divided into three basic types: town centre (the core of the chain), edge-of-town, and neighbourhood food stores. In 1989/1990, in the U.K., D had, on average, 57,121 employees working in its stores, of which 6,021 were in management and supervisory categories, and 4,348 employees working in its head office. Of the total of 61,649, 20,538 were full time and 40,931 were part-time. On a full-time equivalent basis, the

number of employees was 39, 815 . Total U.K. wage/salary cost was £421.3 million, which gave **D** one of the lowest wage to turnover rates in U.K. retailing (Company **D** does not recognise USDAW).

Results in 1989/1990 and the first half of 1990/1991 exceeded City expectations but the recession began to bite in the second half of the latter year. In 1989/1990, turnover reached £5.6 billion, 9.5% above the previous year's figures, while pre-tax profit rose by 14.2% to £604 million. In 1990/91 turnover rose by 3% to 5.8 billion, while pre-tax profit rose by 1.95 to £615.5 million. Profits growth came to a standstill in the second half of 1990/91.

Company **D** came into the news in 1991 when it announced that it planned to cut 850 jobs at head office and among junior mangement in-store. This signified two things: firstly, that the recession was affecting even the seemingly impregnable company **D**, and that senior management intended to cut their cost base; secondly, a change in corporate culture was emerging, with a move away from the traditional paternalism and job-security characteristic of **D**.

Research at Company **D** was conducted in May and October, 1990. This research consisted of two in-depth interviews - one taped, one noted - with senior management staff responsible for personnel and training issues.

USDAW/SWAAP

Informal contact with officials of the shopworkers union USDAW was established early on in the life of the study and maintained throughout the duration of the project. A formal group discussion was organized by an USDAW officer and held at the union's Stratford East office in September, 1990. Present were myself, the USDAW regional Education and Training officer, four London-based USDAW shop-stewards, and two representatives from the Service Workers Action and Advisory Project. Discussion focused upon the implications of contemporary changes in the organization of retail work for the experience of work in retailing, and the policies and practices being developed by USDAW in response to these changes. The discussion lasted two hours and was taped.

appendix ii

bibliography

Bibliography

Abercrombie, N. (1990) 'The privilege of the producer', in R. Keat & N. Abercrombie (eds.) *Enterprise Culture*, London: Routledge (171-185).

Allen, J. (1992a) 'Fordism & Modern Industry', in J. Allen et al. (eds.) *The Political and Economic Forms of Modern Societies*, Cambridge: Polity Press (229-274).

Allen, J. (1992b) 'Services and the UK space economy: regionalization and economic dislocation', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* (forthcoming).

Anthony, P. (1977) *The Ideology of Work*, London, Tavistock.

Armstrong, P. (1989) 'Limits and possibilities of HRM in an age of management accountancy', in J.Storey (ed.) *New Perspectives in Human Resource Management*, London: Routledge (154-166).

Argyris, C. (1957) *Personality and Organization*, New York: Harper & Row.

Baldamus, W. (1961) *Efficiency and Effort*, London: Tavistock.

Bamfield, J. (1980) 'The changing face of British retailing', *National Westminster Quarterly Review*, May, (33-45).

Bamfield, J. (1987) 'Competition and change in British retailing', *National Westminster Quarterly Review*, May, (15-29).

Baudrillard, J. (1988) *Selected Writings* (M. Poster ed.), Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (1987) *Legislators and Interpreters*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (1988) 'Is there a Postmodern Sociology ?', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 5.2-3., (217-37).

Barrett, M. (1991) *The Politics of Truth*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Becker, H. S. (1963) *Outsiders*, New York: The Free Press.

Becker, H.S. (1971) *Sociological Work*, London: Allen Lane.

Beechey, V. & Donald, J. (1985) (eds.) *Subjectivity and Social Relations*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Benson, S.P. (1983) *Counter Cultures: saleswomen, managers and customers in American department stores, 1890-1914*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Berger, P. (1964) 'Some general observations on the problem of work' in P. Berger (ed.) *The Human Shape of Work*, New York: Macmillan, (211-241).

Berger, P. (ed.) (1964) *The Human Shape of Work*, New York: Macmillan.

Bernstein, R.J. (1991) *The New Constellation*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

Beynon, H. (1992) 'The end of the industrial worker?' in N. Abercrombie & A. Warde (eds.) *Social Change in Britain*, Cambridge: Polity Press, (167-183).

Beynon, H. & Blackburn, R.M. (1982) *Perceptions of Work*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Blackwell, R. D. & Wayne Talarzyk, W. (1983) 'Lifestyle retailing: competitive strategies for the 1980s', *Journal of Retailing*, 59.4., (7-27).

Blauner, R. (1964) *Alienation and Freedom*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bluestone, B. & Huff Stevenson, M. (1981) 'Industrial transformation and the evolution of dual labour markets: the case of the retail trade in the United States', in F. Wilkinson (ed.) *The Dynamics of Labour Market Segmentation*, London: Academic Press (23-46).

Blumer, H. (1966) 'Sociological implications of the thought of George Herbert Mead', *American Journal of Sociology*,71.5. (535-48).

Bonner, F. & du Gay, P. (1992) 'Representing the Enterprising Self: thirtysomething and contemporary consumer culture', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 9.2, (67-92).

Bottomore, T. & Rubel, M. (1963) *Karl Marx: selected writings in sociology and social philosophy*, Harmondswoth: Penguin.

Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction* (trans. R. Nice), London: Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (1989) 'Social space and symbolic power', *Sociological Theory*, 7.1., (14-25).

Boyne, R. (1990) *Foucault and Derrida: beyond reason*, London: Unwin Hyman

Braverman, H. (1974) *Labour and Monopoly Capital*, New York: Monthly Review Press.

Brown, R. (1986) 'Occupational identity and career change', Paper delivered to the British Sociological Association Annual Conference, 1986.

Brown, R. & Brannen, P. (1970a) 'Social relations and social perspectives amongst shipbuilding workers - a preliminary statement. Part one', *Sociology*, 4.1. (71-84).

Brown, R. & Brannen, P. (1970b) 'Social relations and social perspectives amongst shipbuilding workers - a preliminary statement. Part two', *Sociology*, 4.2. (197-211).

Brown, R. K. et al. (1972) 'The contours of solidarity: social stratification and industrial relations in shipbuilding', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 10.1. (12-41).

Bulmer, M.(ed.) (1975)*Working-Class Images of Society*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Bulmer, M. (1975) 'Introduction' in M. Bulmer (ed.) *Working-Class Images of Society*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul (3-15)

Burawoy, M. (1979) *Manufacturing Consent*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Burawoy, M. (1985) *The Politics of Production*, London: Verso.

Burchell, G., Gordon, C. & Miller, P. (eds.) *The Foucault Effect: studies in governmentality*, Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Burrell, G. & Morgan, G. (1979) *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis*, London: Heinemann.

Burkitt, I. (1991) 'Social selves: theories of the social formation of personality', *Current Sociology*, 39.3.

Campaign, 03/04/1991.

Campbell, C. (1987) *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Chambers, I. (1986) *Popular Culture: the metropolitan experience*, London:Methuen.

Child, J. (ed.) (1973) *Man & Organization* , London: Allen & Unwin.

Clarke, J. et al. (eds.) (1979) *Working-Class Culture*, London: Hutchinson.

Clarke, J. (1991) *New Times and Old Enemies*, London: Harper Collins.

Clutterbuck, D. & Crainer, S. (1988) *The Decline and Rise of British Industry*, London: W.H. Allen.

Confederation of British Industry (1988) *People - the Cutting Edge*, London: Confederation of British Industry.

Connolly, W. (1991) *Identity/Difference*, New York: Cornell University Press.

Copjec, J. (1989) 'The Orthopsychic Subject: film theory and the reception of Lacan', *October*, 49, (53-71).

Corner, J. & Harvey, S. (eds.) *Enterprise and Heritage*, London: Routledge.

Cousins, M. (1989) ' In the midst of psychoanalysis', *New Formations*, 7, (77-87).

Cousins, M. & Hussain, A. (1984) *Michel Foucault* , London: Macmillan.

Craig, C. & Wilkinson, F. (1985) 'Pay and employment in four retail trades', *Department of Employment Research Paper*, 51, London: Department of Employment.

Critcher, C. (1979) 'Sociology, cultural studies and the post-war working class' in J. Clarke et al. (eds.) *Working-Class Culture*, London: Hutchinson (13-40).

Daniel, W.W. (1973) 'Understanding employee behaviour in its context' in J. Child (ed.) *Man & Organization*, London: Allen & Unwin.

Davies, L. & Cherns, A. (eds.) (1975) *The Quality of Working Life (2 Volumes)*, New York: The Free Press.

Davies, R. & Howard, E. (1988) *The Changing Retail Environment*, London: Longman/ Oxford Institute of Retail Management.

Davies, S. (1990) 'Inserting gender into Burawoy's theory of the Labour Process', *Work, Employment & Society*, 4.3., (391-406).

Davis, H.H. (1979) *Beyond Class Images*, London: Croom Helm.

de Certeau, M. (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life*, London: University of California Press.

Deleuze, G. (1992) 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *October*, 59, Winter 1992, (3-7).

Donald, J. (1992) *Sentimental Education: schooling, popular culture and the reglaltion of liberty*, London: Verso Press.

Dowling, P. (1987) 'Asda's competitive advantage for the 1990s', in *Strategic Issues in Retailing*, Oxfrod Institute of Retail Management Research Papers.

Dreyfus, H. & Rabinow, P. (1982) *Michel Foucault: beyond structuralism and hermeneutics*, Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Dubin, R. (1962) 'Industrial workers' worlds; a study of the central life interests of industrial workers', in A. Rose (ed.) *Human Behaviour and Social Processes*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul (247-66).

Ducatel, K. & Blomley, N. (1990) 'Rethinking retail capital', *International Journal of Urban & Regional Research*, 19.2., (207-227).

du Gay, P. & Salaman, G. (1992) 'The cult[ure] of the customer', *Journal of Management Studies* (forthcoming).

Eagleton, T. (1991) *Ideology*, London: Verso.

Edgar, D. (1991) 'Are you being served ?', *Marxism Today*, May, (28).

Edwards, R. (1979) *Contested Terrain*, London: Heinemann.

Elster, J. (1985) *Making Sense of Marx*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Euromonitor (1990) *Retail Trade U.K. 1989/1990*, London: Euromonitor.

Featherstone, M. (1982) 'The body in consumer culture', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 4.1., (55-70).

Featherstone, M. (1987) 'Lifestyle and Consumer Culture', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 4.1., (55-70).

Featherstone, M. (1990) *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, London: Sage.

The Financial Times, 08/05/1991, (12)

Fiske, J. (1989) *Understanding Popular Culture*, London: Unwin Hyman.

Fitch, R. & Woudhuysen, J. (1987) 'The strategic significance of design', in E. McFadyen (ed.) *The Changing Face of British Retailing*, London: Newman Books.

Fitch - RS plc (1989) 'Retail insight', (Spring), London: Fitch - RS plc.

Foucault, M. (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London: Tavistock.

Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline and Punish*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Foucault, M. (1980) *Power/Knowledge*, Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Foucault, M. (1981) *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Foucault, M. (1982) 'The Subject and Power', in H. L. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow *Michel Foucault: beyond structuralism and hermenuetics*, Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf (208-226).

Foucault, M. (1984) 'On the Genealogy of Ethics: an overview of work in progress' in P. Rabinow (ed.) *The Foucault Reader*, Harmondsworth: Penguin (340-372).

Foucault, M. (1987) *The Use of Pleasure: the history of sexuality (volume two)*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Foucault, M. (1988a) 'Technologies of the Self' in L.H. Martin et al. (eds.) *Technologies of the Self*, London: Tavistock.

Foucault, M. (1988b) 'The Political Technology of Individuals' in L.H. Martin et al. (eds.) *Technologies of the Self*, London: Tavistock.

Foucault, M. (1988c) *The Care of the Self: the history of sexuality (volume three)*, Harmondswoth: Penguin.

Foucault, M. (1991) 'Governmentality', in G. Burchell et al. (eds.) *The Foucault Effect: studies in governmentality*, Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf (87-104).

Fox, A. (1974) *Beyond Contract: work, power and trust relations*, London: Faber & Faber.

Fox, A. (1980) 'The meaning of work', in G. Esland & G. Salaman (eds.) *The Politics of Work and Occupations*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press (139-191).

Frow, J. (1991) 'Michel de Certeau and the practice of representation', *Cultural Studies*, 5.1., (52-60).

Fuller, L. & Smith, V. (1991) 'Consumers' reports: management by customers in a new economy', *Work, Employment & Society*, 5.1., (1-16).

Gamble, A. (1988) *The Free Economy and the Strong State*, London: Macmillan.

Gaukroger, S. (1986) 'Romanticism and decommodification: Marx's conception of Socialism', *Economy & Society*, 15.3., (287-333).

Giddens, A. (1979) *Central Problems in Social Theory*, London: Macmillan.

Goffman, E (1961) *Asylums*, New York: Anchor Books.

Gold, R. (1964) 'In the basement - the apartment building janitor' in P. Berger (ed.) *The Human Shape of Work*, New York: Macmillan (1-49).

Goldthorpe, J. et al (1968) *The Affluent Worker: industrial attitudes and behaviour*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Goldthorpe, J. et al. (1969) *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gordon, C. (1987) 'The Soul of the Citizen: Max Weber and Michel Foucault on rationality and government' in S. Whimster & S. Lash (eds.) *Max Weber: rationality and modernity*, London: Allen & Unwin, (293-316).

Gordon, C. (1991) 'Governmental Rationality: an introduction' in G. Burchell et al. (eds.) *The Foucault Effect: studies in governmentality*, Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf (1-51).

Gorz, A. (1965) 'Work and Consumption', in P. Anderson & R. Blackburn (eds.) *Towards Socialism*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Gorz, A. (1989) *Critique of Economic Reason*, London: Verso.

Grant, R.M. (1987) 'Manufacturer - retailer relations: the shifting balance of power', in G. Johnson (ed.) *Business Strategy and Retailing*, London: John Wiley (43-58).

Grossberg, L. (1988) 'Wandering audiences, nomadic critics', *Cultural Studies*, 2.3., (377-391).

Guest, D. (1989) 'Human resource management: its implications for industrial relations and trade unions', in J. Storey (ed.) *New Perspectives in Human Resource Management*, London: Routledge (41-55).

Guest, D. (1990) 'Human resource management and the American dream', *Journal of Management Studies*, 27,September 1990, (377-397).

Hacking, I. (1983) *Representing and Intervening*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hacking, I. (1986) 'Making Up People' in T.C. Heller et al. (eds.) *Reconstructing Individualism*, Stanford: Stanford University Press (222-236).

Hall, S. (1984) 'The problem of ideology' in B. Matthews (ed.) *Marx 100 Years On*, London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Hall, S. (1988) *The Hard Road to Renewal*, London: Verso.

Hall, S. (1991) 'And not a shot fired', *Marxism Today*, December, (10-15).

Hall, S. (1992) 'The West and the Rest: discourse and power' in S. Hall & B. Gieben (eds.) *Formations of Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press (275-331).

Haraway, D. (1990) 'A manifesto for cyborgs: science, technology and socialist feminism in the 1980s', in L. Nicholson (ed.) *Feminism/Postmodernism*, London: Routledge. (190-233)

Harvey, D. (1989) *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Hebdige, D. (1979) *Subculture: the meaning of style*, London: Methuen.

Hebdige, D. (1981) 'Object as image: the Italian scooter cycle', *Block*, 5, (44-64).

Hebdige, D. (1989) 'After the masses', *Marxism Today*, January, (48-53).

Heelas, P. (1992) 'The sacralization of the self and new age capitalism', in Abercrombie, N. & Warde, A. (eds.) *Social Change in Britain*, Cambridge: Polity Press (139-166).

Held. D. (1991) 'Democracy, the Nation-State and the Global System', *Economy & Society*, 20.2., (138-172).

Henriques, J. et al. (1984) *Changing the Subject*, London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.

Herzberg, F. (1968) *Work and the Nature of Man*, St. Albans: Staples Press.

Hill, S. (1976) *The Dockers*, London: Heinemann.

Hill, S. (1991) 'How do you manage a flexible firm ? The Total Quality model', *Work, Employment & Society*, 5.3., (397-415).

Hirst, P. & Woolley, P. (1982) *Social Relations and Human Attributes*, London: Tavistock.

Hochschild, A. (1983) *The Managed Heart*, Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Hollway, W. (1984) 'Fitting work: psychological assessment in organizations', in J. Henriques et al., *Changing the Subject*, Londeon: Methuen & Co. Ltd. (26-59).

Hollway, W. (1991) *Work Psychology and Organizational Behaviour*, London: Sage.

Howard, R. (1985) *Brave New Workplace*, New York: Viking Penguin.

Hughes, E.C. (1971) *The Sociological Eye: selected papers*, Chicago: Aldine-Atherton.

Hunter, I. (1987) 'Setting Limits to Culture', *New Formations*, 4, (103-123).

Hyman, R. (1987) 'Strategy or Structure? Capital, Labour and Control', *Work, Employment & Society*, 1.1., (25-55).

Jameson, F. (1984) 'Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism', *New Left Review*, July/August, (53-92).

Jameson, F. (1990) 'Clinging to the Wreckage - a conversation with Stuart Hall', *Marxism Today*, September, (28-30).

Joas, H. (1987) 'Symbolic Interactionism' in A. Giddens & J.H. Turner (eds.) *Social Theory Today*, Cambridge: Polity Press (82-115).

Johnson, G. (eds.) *Business Strategy in Retailing*, London: John Wiley.

Kanter, R.M. (1990) *When Giants Learn to Dance*, London: Unwin Hyman.

Keat, R. (1990) 'Introduction' in R. Keat & N. Abercrombie (eds.) *Enterprise Culture*, London: Routledge (3-10).

Keat, R. & Abercrombie, N. (1990) *Enterprise Culture*, London: Routledge.

Knee, D. & Walters, D. (1985) *Strategy in Retailing*, Oxford: Philip Allan.

Knights, D. (1990) 'Subjectivity, power and the labour process' in D. Knights & H. Willmott (eds.) *Labour Process Theory*, London: Macmillan (297-335)

Knights, D. & Willmott, H. (1989) 'Power and Subjectivity at Work: from degradation to subjugation in social relations', *Sociology*, 23.4., (535-558).

Knights, D. & Willmott, H. (1990) *Labour Process Theory*, London: Macmillan.

Knights, D. et al. (1991) 'Strategic management, financial services and information technology', Paper presented to the 10th Colloquium of the European Group for Organizational Studies (EGOS), Vienna, 15-17th July, 1991.

Lacan, J. (1987) 'Television', *October*, 40, Spring, 1987, (1-50).

Laclau, E. (1990) *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, London: Verso.

Laclau, E. & Mouffe, C. (1985) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, London: Verso.

Laclau, E. & Mouffe, C. (1987) 'Post-Marxism without apologies', *New Left Review*, 166, (79-106).

Lash, S. (1988) 'Discourse or figure ? Postmodernism as a "regime of signification"', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 5. 2-3., (311-336).

Lash. S. (1990) *Sociology of Postmodernism*, London: Routledge.

Lash, S. & Urry, J. (1987) *The End of Organized Capitalism*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

de Lauretis, T. (1987) *Technologies of Gender*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Lefort, C. (1986) *The Political Forms of Modern Society*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Legge, K. (1989) 'Human Resource Management: a critical analysis' in J. Storey (ed.) *New Perspectives in Human Resource Management*, London: Routledge (19-40).

Lewis, J.C. (1985) 'Technical change in retailing: its impact on employment and access', *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*, 12, (165-191).

Lockwood, D. (1975) 'Sources of variation in working class images of society' in M. Bulmer (ed.) *Working Class Images of Society*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul (16-31).

Lockwood, D. (1975) 'Sources of variation in working class images of society' in G. Esland et al. (eds.) *People and Work*, Edinburgh: Holmes/McDougal/Open University Press (197-208).

Lockwood, D. (1988) 'The weakest link in the chain ? Some comments on the Marxist theory of action' in D. Rose (ed.) *Social Stratification and Economic Change*, London: Hutchinson (57-97).

MacIntyre, A. (1985) *After Virtue*, London: Duckworth.

Marchington, M. & Parker, P. (1990) *Changing Patterns of Employee Relations*, Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Marcuse, H. (1964) *One-Dimensional Man*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Marshall, G. (1988) 'Some remarks on the study of working-class consciousness' in D. Rose (eds.) *Social Stratification and Economic Change*, London: Hutchinson (98-126).

Martin, P. & Nicholls, J. (1987) *Creating a Committed Workforce*, London: Institute of Personnel Management.

Mauss, M. (1979) *Sociology and Psychology*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Mayo, E. (1933) *The Human Problems of an Industrial Civilisation*, New York: Macmillan.

Mayo, E. (1949) *The Social Problems of an Industrial Civilisation*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

McGregor, D. (1960) *The Human Side of Enterprise*, New York: McGraw-Hill.

McRobbie, A. (1991) 'New times in cultural studies', *New Formations*, 13, (1-17).

Mercer, K. (1991) 'Welcome to the jungle', in J. Rutherford (ed.) *Identity*, London: Lawrence & Wishart (43-71).

Miller, D. (1987) *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Miller, P. & O'Leary, T. (1989) 'The Entrepreneurial Order', Paper presented to the 5th Annual UMIST/Aston Conference on the Organization and Control of the Labour Process.

Miller, P. & Rose, N. (1990) 'Governing Economic Life', *Economy & Society*, 19.1., (1-31)

Mills, C.W. (1953) *White Collar*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Mills, C.W. (1963) 'Situated actions and vocabularies of motive', in C.W. Mills *Power, Politics and People*, New York: Oxford University Press, (439-452).

Minson, J. (1985) *Genealogies of Morals*, London: Macmillan.

Morley, D. (1992) 'The geography of television: ideology, domesticity and community', Paper presented to the Open University Seminar Series 'Culture & Communication', May, 1992.

Moorhouse, H. F. (1984) 'American Automobiles and Workers' Dreams', in K. Thompson (ed.) *Work, Employment & Unemployment*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press (247-260).

Moorhouse, H. (1989) 'Models of work, models of leisure' in C. Rojek (ed.) *Leisure for Leisure*, London: Routledge (15-35).

Morris, M. (1988) ' Banality in Cultural Studies', *Discourse*, 10, (2-29).

Mort, F. (1989) 'The writing on the wall', *New Statesman & Society*, 12 May, (40-41).

Mouffe, C. (1991) 'Pluralism and modern democracy: around Carl Schmitt', *New Formations*, 14, (1-16).

Murray, R. (1988a) 'From Fordism to flexibility: the place of retailing', Paper presented to a Symposium on the Micro-Electronics Revolution and Regional Development, Labour Organisation and the Future of the Post-Industrialising Societies, Milan, April, 1988.

Murray, R. (1988b) 'Life after Henry (Ford)', *Marxism Today*, October.

Nava, M. (1987) 'Consumerism and its contradictions', *Cultural Studies*, 1.2., (204-210).

Newby, H. (1977) *The Deferential Worker*, London: Allen Lane.

Noyelle, T. (1987) *Beyond Industrial Dualism*, Boulder: Westview Press.

Noyelle, T. (ed.) (1990) *Skills, Wages and Productivity in the Service Sector*, Boulder: Westview.

Oakley, A. (1981) 'Interviewing women: a contradiction in terms ?', in H. Roberts (ed.) *Doing Feminist Research*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, (30-61)

Ogbonna, E. & Wilkinson, B. (1988) 'Corporate strategy and corporate culture: the management of change in the U.K. supermarket industry', *Personnel Review*, 17.6., (10-14).

Ogbonna, E. & Wilkinson, B. (1990) 'Corporate strategy and corporate culture: the view from the checkout', *Personnel Review*, 19.4., (9-15).

Ollman, B (1971) *Alienation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ouchi, W. (1981) *Theory Z*, Reading, Mass: Addison Wesley.

Pascale, R. (1990) *Managing on the Edge*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Pateman, C. (1989) *The Disorder of Women*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Peters, T. & Waterman, R.H. (1982) *In Search of Excellence*, New York: Harper & Row.

Peters, T. (1987) *Thriving on Chaos*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Pinchot, G. (1985) *Intrapreneuring: why you don't have to leave the corporation to become an entrepreneur*, New York: Harper & Row.

Pond, C. (1977) *Trouble in Store*, London: Low Pay Unit.

Retail Week, 09/03/1990.

Retail Week, 23/03/1990.

Retail Week, 04/05/1990.

Retail Week, 06/07/1990.

Retail Week, 13/07/1990.

Retail Week, 20/07/1990.

Retail Week, 02/08/1990.

Retail Week, 31/08/1990.

Retail Week, 19/09/1990.

Retail Week, 30/11/1990.

Retail Week, 19/04/1991.

Review - The Journal of The House Of Fraser, January/February, 1989, Issue 11, (61).

Robertson, R. (1980) 'Aspects of identity and authority in sociological theory', in R. Robertson & B. Holzner (eds.) *Identity and Authority*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell (218-265).

Robins, K. (1991) 'Tradition or Translation: national culture in its global context' in J. Corner & S. Harvey (eds.) *Enterprise and Heritage*, London: Routledge. (21-44)

Robinson, O. (1988) 'The changing labour market: growth of part-time employment and labour market segmentation in Britain', in S. Walby (ed.) *Gender Segregation at Work, Milton Keynes*, Open University Press (114-134).

Robinson, O. & Wallace, J. (1974) 'Part-time employment and low pay in retail distribution in Britain', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 5.1., (38-54).

Roethlisberger, F.J. & Dickson, W.J. (1939) *Management and the Worker*,

Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Rock, P. (1979) *The Making of Symbolic Interactionism*, London: Macmillan.

Rorty, R. (1982) *Consequences of Pragmatism*, Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Rorty, R. (1991) *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rose, M. (1988) *Industrial Behaviour*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Rose, N. (1989) 'Governing the Enterprising Self', Paper presented to a Conference on The Values of the Enterprise Culture, University of Lancaster, September.

Rose, N. (1990) *Governing the Soul*, London: Routledge.

Roy, D. (1969) ' Making Out: a counter-system of workers' control of work situation and relationships' in T. Burns (ed.) *Industrial Man*, London: Allen Lane (359-379).

Roy, D. (1973) 'Banana Time: job satisfaction and informal interaction' in G. Salaman & K. Thompson (eds.) *People and Organisations*, London: Longman (205-222).

Rubery, J., Tarling, R. & Wilkinson, F. (1987) 'Flexibility, marketing and the organization of production', *Labour & Society*, 12.1., (131-151).

Sabel, C. (1982) *Work and Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sabel, C. (1990) 'Skills without a Place: the reorganization of the corporation and the

experience of work', Paper presented to the British Sociological Annual Conference, University of Surrey, Guildford, April, 1990.

Salaman, G. (1974) *Community and Occupation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Salaman, G. (1986) *Working*, Chichester: Ellis Horwood/Tavistock.

Sayer, A. (1992) *Method in Social Science (2nd Edition)*, London: Routledge.

Segal-Horn, S. (1987) 'The retail environment in the U.K.', in G. Johnson (ed.) *Business Strategy & Retailing*, London: John Wiley (13-33).

Silver, J. (1987) 'The Ideology of Excellence: management and neo-conservatism', *Studies in Political Economy*, 24, (105-129).

Smith, P. (1988) *Discerning the Subject*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Smith, S. (1988) 'How much change at the store ? The impact of new technologies and labour processes on managers and staffs in retail distribution', in D. Knights and H. Willmott (eds.) *New Technology and the Labour Process*, London: Macmillan (143-162).

Sparks, L. (1987) 'Employment in retailing: trends and issues', in G. Johnson (ed.) *Business Strategy and Retailing*, London: John Wiley (239-255).

Sparks, L. (1989) 'The retail sector', in P. Jones (ed.) *Management in Service Industries*, London: Pitman (42-65).

Storey, J. (1985) 'The means of management control', *Sociology*, 19.2., (193-211).

Storey, J. (ed.) (1989) *New Perspectives in Human Resource Management* , London: Routledge.

Storey, J. & Sisson, K. (1989) 'Looking to the Future' in J. Storey (ed.) *New Perspectives in Human Resource Management*, London: Routledge (167-183).

Strauss, A. (1969) *Mirrors and Masks*, San Francisco: The Sociology Press.

Stryker, S. (1980) *Symbolic Interactionism*, California: Benjamin/Cummings Publishing.

Taylor, C. (1989) *Sources of the Self*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thompson, P. (1990) 'Crawling from the wreckage: the labour process and the politics of production' in D. Knights & H. Willmott (eds.) *Labour Process Theory*, London: Macmillan (95-124).

Thompson, P. & McHugh, D. (1990) *Work Organizations: a critical introduction*, London: Macmillan.

Townley, B. (1989) 'Selection and Appraisal: reconstituting social relations?' in J.Storey (ed.) *New Perspectives in Human Resource Management*, London: Routledge (92-108).

Turner, B. (1986) 'Sociological Aspects of Organizational Symbolism', *Organization Studies*, 7., (101-115).

Urry, J. (1990) 'Work, Production and Social Relations', *Work, Employment & Society*, 4.2. (271-280).

Veblen, T. (1957) *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, London: George Allen & Unwin.

Walsh, T. (1988) 'Segmentation and flexibility: part-time and temporary work in the retail and hotel trades', paper presented to 'Questions of Restructuring Work and Employment' Conference, University of Warwick, Industrial Relations Research Unit, July, 1988.

Walters, D. & Knee, D. (1985) 'Competing successfully in a dynamic world', *Retail and Distribution Management*, March/April, (11-17).

Warde, A. (1992) 'Notes on the relationship between production and consumption', in R. Burrows & C. Marsh (eds.) *Consumption & Class: divisions and change*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, (15-31).

Westergaard, J. (1970) 'The re-discovery of the cash-nexus' in R. Miliband & J. Saville (eds.) *The Socialist Register 1970*, London: Merlin (111-38).

White, D. (1987) 'The role of advertising in developing retail strategy', in *Strategic Issues in Retailing*, Oxford institute of Retail Management Research Papers.

Williams, R. (1977) *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Williamson, J. (1986) 'The problems of being popular', *New Socialist*, 41, (14-15).

Williamson, J. (1991) column in *The Guardian* newspaper (04/07/1991), (28).

Willis, P. (1978) *Profane Culture*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Willis, P. (1990) *Common Culture: symbolic work at play in the everyday cultures of the young*, Milton Keynes:Open University Press.

Wood, S. (ed.) (1982) *The Degradation of Work ?* , London: Hutchinson.

Wood, S. (1989) 'New Wave Management ?', *Work, Employment & Society*, 3.3. (379-402).

Work Research Unit Case Study Report (1991), 'B&Q: "who cares wins", London: Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service.

Wright, P. (1987) 'Excellence', *London Review of Books*, May, (8-11).

Yudice, G. (1989) 'Marginality and the ethics of survival', in A. Ross (eds.) *Universal Abandon ?*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press (214-236).

Zizek, S. (1989) *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, London: Verso.

Zizek, S. (1991) *For They Know Not What They Do: enjoyment as a political factor*, London: Verso.